normative in noncompetitive ways. The more we can understand our ethical and political problems through the theory of ritual, the more resources we have for adjudicating the clash of civilizations in normative, civilized ways. Whereas Tu's existential Confucianism has many Western analogues in its treatment of choice and commitment, especially within Christianity, there is little Western analogue to the ritual theory of normative cultures.

Tu Weiming's Boston Confucianism of humanization, self-cultivation, and existential commitment to the way of the sage has not only shown the viability of the Confucian tradition for the late-modern world and led many of his peers in the articulation of that point. It has also provided a profound answer to the moral and political relativism that seems to plague late-modernity. Western existentialism has been part of the glorification of will that makes power the source of the definition of the right. Even those who are aggrieved by the conditions of our time so often think that the solution is for them to have power rather than their oppressors. Tu has shown that individuating choice and commitment are to be understood as the appropriation of the normative principles of human nature. Although the norms for human nature are contextual and situational on his view, they are not at all relative. That is an extraordinary contribution to ethical theory. To couple Tu's Boston Confucianism so described with a Boston Confucian theory of ritual convention as constitutive of humanity in both personal and social dimensions provides an even more effective approach to norms in an age of pluralism, social disintegration, and conflict.

5.4. The Question of Love (Ren)

Tu Weiming's central concern from the beginning of his career has been the Confucian problematic of *ren*, with the range of meanings from humaneness to love. There must be something important to the idea of love because it is central to so many of the world's major religious traditions, albeit with different stresses and nuances. The concept of love has an extremely broad extension in both Christianity and Confucianism, beginning as a human virtue, the chief virtue, the virtue that defines authentic or holy humanity. Love lends itself finally to the root metaphoric work for ontology, in the Christian notion that the divine act of creation of the world is pure love, that love is creativity, and in the Confucian notion, spelled out in Zhu Xi's *Treatise on Jen*, that love is the empowering principle of coming to be, developing, flourishing, and having consequences (in Chan 1963, 594). Tu puts the point well in his interpretive summary of *The Doctrine of the Mean*: "it can be understood and appreciated as the unfolding of an ethicoreligious vision on the inseparability of the Human Way and the Way of Heaven" (1976b, 3). The argument here will not deal with the ontological uses of the notion of love but will examine the personal or existential.

Little needs to be said to substantiate the claim that love is an important virtue in both Confucianism and Christianity. The Confucian concept of *ren* dates to Confucius himself, as in his discussions in Book 4 of *The Analects*. Its range of meanings include, besides love, benevolence, perfect virtue, goodness, human-heartedness, and altruism. Wing-tsit Chan points out that "Neo-Confucianists interpreted it as impartiality, the character of production and reproduction, consciousness, seeds that generate, the will to grow, one who forms one body with Heaven and Earth, or 'the character of love and the principle of mind.' "[4] These latter meanings illustrate the more ontological senses of the term. Translating *ren* in *The Analects*, D. C. Lau (Confucius 1979) uses benevolence, whereas Wing-tsit Chan uses humanity; Tu follows Chan in his discussion of the text of the *Zhong-Yung*.

Love is central to the Christianity of the New Testament. It is the chief characteristic Jesus ascribed to God, and the virtue he advocated for people in their relations with one another. He also asked the disciples to love him and to love God.[5] Saint Paul's hymn to love in *1 Corinthians* 13 is a classic that transcends the Christian tradition, and it ends by saying that love is the greatest of virtues, greater than faith or hope, both of which were more the focus of his own writings than love. Jesus was clear that love is the greatest virtue when he gave the great commandment summarizing all the law: "You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (*Mark* 12:30–31; see also *Matthew* 22:34–40, and *Luke* 10:25–28).

That love, or *ren*, is the cardinal virtue in Confucianism is stated in the *Zhong-Yung* (chapter 20), where it says that *ren* is the distinguishing character of the human; *ren* is *ren* (Chan 1963, 104; Tu 1976a, 50). Mencius repeats the saying in 7B:16, and in his famous discussion of the Four Beginnings at 2A:6, humanity is the first virtue begun from commiseration or fellow-feeling. Both Confucianism and Christianity go so far as to say that *ren* or love is what makes people human, a normative definition of human nature; thus Christianity can say that love constitutes humaneness.[6]

The Chinese character for *ren* shows two people together, and as a virtue it is the ideal of "human-relatedness," a phrase with which Tu

often translates *ren*. He points out that the Confucian tradition never defined human beings as social beings or symbol users, as is common in the West, but as *ren*, as capable of expressing humanity. This has two related parts. On the one hand is the inner cultivation of an inborn tendency to be humane, especially as this is explicated in the Mencian tradition. On the other hand, *ren* means establishing real loving relations with other people, a matter of acting in society. The forms by which humanity is established with others are those of ritual propriety, which Tu interprets as the externalization and codification of inner *ren*. It was argued before that ritual propriety in the form of conventions of symbolic behavior is necessary for any human relations at all, and that ritual thus is a precondition for the expression of anything social in one's inner nature. But this is only to make Tu's point about the need for love to find expression in external human relations all the stronger. A human being is someone who is capable of, and has impulses toward, good human relations, and a good human being is one who exercises and perfects that capability through practice. This means not only following the right ritual forms with one's companions but also individuating and perfecting particular relations with specific family, friends, and fellow citizens.

Confucians and Christians agree that the capacity for love is inborn and definitive of what it means to be human. *The Doctrine of the Mean* opens with the claim that the Way, which later is identified with *ren*, is imparted by heaven, and as we have seen, the Neo-Confucians developed this into the subtle position that heavenly principle is embodied in every person as the essence of human nature. Christians say that persons are created in the image of God, and although this has meant a great many things, one of the most important is that persons are formed in the image of God's creative love, or at least have that capacity in a limited way. The differentiated comparison between Confucianism and Christianity gets interesting at the points of asking how the inborn capacity gets aroused and cultivated, and what might go wrong so as to make that cultivation problematic.

It is noteworthy that neither Confucianism nor Christianity treats sexual attraction as the initiating point of love, which was Plato's way. In the *Phaedrus* and even more directly in the *Symposium*, Plato said that sexual love, which everyone has in some form however crude, can be cultivated to higher and higher levels of erotic love until good things are appreciated for their own sakes, not for any special gratification of the lover. Enriching the metaphors of erotic love, Plato elaborated the dimensions of love that involve friendship and altruism so that the highest kind of love is the cultivation of the next

generation with institutions that fulfill them in such ways as they themselves can become lovers after their various types.[7] Neither Confucianism nor Christianity begins this way.

Both begin with parental love. In the Confucian case this is closely connected with the relations usually explained as filial piety. Parents naturally, biologically as it were, love their infants. Parental love is also, and more importantly, a process of growth in love. As children grow, parents learn the subtle art of providing care while slowly relinquishing control so that the children learn responsibility; perhaps it is mainly in parenting that the profoundest lessons of boundary-setting and individuation are learned. Children, of course, get into trouble and disappoint us. They get sick and sometimes die. In all this parental love is tested and grown. By the time children reach adolescence, parents in every culture of the world would grit their teeth and agree with Saint Paul that love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (*1 Corinthians* 13:7). Because parental love wants children to be fulfilled and as perfect as possible, it wants the children to become parents themselves in order to learn how to love fully as parents do. In East Asian Confucian cultures children have the filial duty to provide their parents with grandchildren. This has often been given an economic interpretation, and there might be something to that. But the true religious motivation is that the long course of parenting is how one learns love in its fulness, and this is what good parents want for their children. Tu Weiming says that filial piety is not so much taking care of your parents when they get old but rather becoming so virtuous yourself as to set them free from further work in bringing you up to be a good person.

Becoming a good person, says Tu, means learning how to love, which is the way of humanity and the dao of heaven: the paradigmatic curriculum for learning how to love is being a parent. Little children are turned on to love by receiving love and slowly learning those things necessary for adult responsible life. The greatest responsibility is raising children of their own. Of course, not all adults have, or should have, children, but there are many surrogate contexts of long-term caring that express the same learning of love.

Tu argues that parental love is not only a domestic virtue but is at the heart of politics. The greatest power the emperor has is his capacity to inspire others to imitate his virtue, and the central virtue in which *ren* is most conspicuous is parental love, extended to love of one's family and beyond. Whereas egalitarian Westerners might take nepotism to be a vice, in classical Confucian thinking the people should see how the emperor loves the members of his family, disciplining

them like a parent but also setting them up with rewards and a living. Of course, the emperor ought not put a corrupt or incompetent relative into a ministry, because the empire would suffer, but short of that, his care of his family is exemplary and when displayed in practice and policy should encourage others to do that. As Tu (1976b, 87) says,

> [T]he ruler cannot exercise his power directly on the people; his political influence can only be extended gradually through the mediation of appointed offices. If he fails to identify himself with the welfare of those who are responsible for the execution of his policies, his leadership will be greatly weakened. What he must do, then, is to see to it that his esteem for the worthy, his care for his proximity of blood, and his respect for the great ministers do not hamper his consideration for all officialdom—including the host of subordinate bureaucrats as well. Indeed, this process of inclusion must also involve artisans, farmers, and even strangers from far countries. The ruler's moral persuasion can be truly effective only if it is conducted in the spirit of impartiality. Once the ruler's concern is limited to special interest groups, his efficacy as a leader for the whole country becomes problematical.

The fiduciary community, as Tu calls it, is based not on trust in contracts but in the mutually reinforcing resonances of parental love reciprocated by filial piety, in family after family from the emperor to the rudest peasant (Tu 1976b, chapter 3). Confucians emphasize "love with distinctions," paying closest attention and care to one's immediate relatives, then distant relations, then unrelated neighbors, and finally to strangers in distant parts (*Mencius* 3A:5, in Chan 1963, 71). This does not lead to a justice of equality, as the Moists pointed out, but it does lead to regarding even the most distant person as subject to a degree of the regard you would have for your beloved children.

Of course, there are many human relations besides that of a parent loving a child, including relations between wife and husband, among siblings, cousins, friends, villagers, officials, distant citizens, and with the barbarians. These all have complicated proper forms, and the proper way to love your friend is not likely to be the way you properly love your children. Nevertheless, the model of parental love is like a flywheel that keeps all these other relations in balance. You should love your siblings as children beloved of your parents. You should treat your neighbors with the respect that honors their own parents' love of them. You should treat all citizens as distant children of the emperor, and the barbarians as people who would greatly benefit from having a father

like your emperor. To be fully human is to have realized the fullness of parental love, reciprocating it in filial piety toward your parents, and living out its implications in all your human relationships, according to Tu's Confucianism.

Beginning with Jesus, Christians too have taken the father's, or the parents', love as the paradigm of the love God is understood to have and also that is ideal for the human practice of love. But unlike the Confucians—indeed, in very stark contrast with them—Christians do not assume that everyone has good parents from whom to learn love or that they themselves can be good parents so as to perfect that love. Christianity is a religion for widows and orphans, for broken families (see section 10.2). If a person is so fortunate as to have loving parents, and to live in such settled and prosperous times as to be able to bring one's own children up in love and security, that is a great blessing, but a rare one. So Jesus developed a strange dialectic in describing ideal parents (actually, like the Confucians, just "fathers"). He used this human ideal as a description of God who cares for the birds of the air and all his earthly children even more, giving them bread and fish rather than stones and snakes (*Luke* 12:22–34). He described ideal fathers such as the father of the prodigal son as images of God (*Luke* 15:11–32). We should look to God as our ideal father, on the one hand, because God is our creator, the Father of All, and, on the other hand, because God's character is loving in a symbolic parental way. Then we should use the image of God as loving parent to guide our own human love, caring for others. Our own parenting should be in imitation of God's love.

Jesus took the kinship relations and universalized them: all human beings are brothers and sisters, and God is the Father of all. Like the Confucians, Jesus and the early Christians construed all human relations, whatever their formal roles, as being tinged with family affection, all people being recognized as children of God and all obliged to some version of filial piety or gratitude. Unlike the Moists, the Christian conception of the universal human family was based on love like that of siblings all loved by the Heavenly Father, not a matter of mere impersonal justice.

For Christians, a human being's inmost defining nature, which is to be an image of God, is brought to full expression only in a community in which people love one another in appropriate ways as children of God and love God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength, as their true father. Tu has argued that for Confucianism one's inmost nature as a *ren* person can be expressed, developed, and fulfilled only in the cultivation of rich human relations within a

community. Christianity says the same thing about the image of God: it is not a private virtue or faculty such as reason or will, but all the human faculties aimed at social living characterized as loving the family of God.

5.5. The Question of Evil

But now we must face up to the problem of real evil. If the capacity for love is built into the heart of human nature and is as easy as being seduced by an infant, if in fact God is like a father and all people are sisters and brothers, why is the world such a mess? The phrase "learning to love," is profoundly ambiguous. On the one hand, it has a merely developmental dimension, as one is supposed to learn love in the family or the religious community. But on the other hand, that learning in reality often is blocked so that something as dislocating as an existential decision is required to gain access to the innate or nascent love in the soul. Even in good families, Tu would say, it is necessary for a would-be sage to make a serious decision to follow the path of unfolding love or humaneness. Evil is not merely immaturity.

The standard Confucian position is that inborn love or *ren* is corrupted or thwarted by selfishness, and there are two main traditions accounting for selfishness. One following from Mencius says that society corrupts the natural tendencies to humane development. The other following from Xunzi says that society fails to teach the complicated ways or rituals by which love can be expressed beyond the elementary level, and people are thrown back on competition, breeding selfishness. Xunzi is supposed to have said that human nature is evil, not *ren*, contrary to Mencius' belief that *ren* is always in the heart ready to rise again like new shoots in a logged-over forest. But Xunzi's point is that *ren* finds no natural expression unless it has symbolic forms in which to express itself. He was not a nature romantic but insisted that everything human has to be shaped by learned conventions or forms, that is, symbolic meaning. He never denied that the human heart would fail to respond in *ren* if the proper forms were present and ingrained. Most Confucians from both strains say that some people are natively large-minded and loving persons and that others are natively small-minded and have to work much harder to overcome selfishness. But everyone can learn to be humane, loving, and fulfilled in *ren*. All they need is effort, and they might first need to gain the possibility of applying effort.

Tu, as we have seen, gives a far more forceful and interesting interpretation of selfishness and its remedy than the standard one. The central problem for Tu's self-cultivation is that in the ordinary state of affairs we are existentially alienated from our original substance. In the state of existential alienation, merely trying harder to be a sage is not enough. Rather, the alienation itself needs to be reversed. This is indeed like Saint Paul's famous claim (*Romans* 5–7) that the sinful person degenerates into slavery to sin in his members, which comes from turning away from God; salvation consists in turning back to God. How? Tu's answer as we have seen is that we must make a deliberate act of commitment to the way of the sage, an act of faith. Self-cultivation is not just more effort at perfection but the conscious existential act of committing oneself to the process of taking on the identity of the one who will struggle toward perfection.

Both Confucianism and Christianity face the dilemma of alienation: although heavenly principle (in the former case) and the image of God (in the latter) lie in the heart, and from them mature humaneness and love might grow, the ordinary existential situation is that people are alienated from them and cannot access them. Both traditions also respond with the same strategy: developed humaneness or love needs to be encountered in a concrete human being who provides a model. In the Confucian case, that is a parent, an ancestor or sage-emperor, more likely a teacher; in the Christian case, Jesus or a saint bearing Jesus' love. This Confucian-Christian agreement in strategy will be developed more in sections 10.2 to 10.4. But despite the similarity of strategies, the metaphoric systems of Christianity and Confucianism in this regard seem far apart.

The Christian symbols are that God's parental love intervenes to create the child over again, into a New Being, as Paul put it and as will be elaborated more fully in section 10.2. This is done by overwhelming the diminished self with love, as a parent takes back a wicked, broken prodigal child. If God, who knows the sinner's deepest sin, can still love the sinner, then the sinner who accepts this love can have the courage or power to turn back to God. There are many Christian accounts of how God's love is manifested in an overwhelming way, and they are not mutually compatible. But they have in common that this is accomplished or initiated by Jesus. The most minimalist account is that Jesus himself had an extraordinary capacity to love that derived from his own worshipful and prayerful relation with God, and that this attracted people to him. He taught a way of life consisting in fellowship, in carrying on a ministry of care for those who need it, and in teaching both that we are in God's kingdom rather than a kingdom defined in merely worldly terms and that God is merciful, forgiving sins. By dedicating themselves to Jesus' way, the disciples

discover step by step that God loves them and that they are accepted. This gives greater and greater power until finally they can accept themselves as accepted, to use Tillich's phrase, and with this self-acceptance have the power to turn back to God directly (Tillich 1948, "You Are Accepted"). Perceiving God's love of them, as manifested through following Jesus' way, people respond in thanksgiving to God. This thanksgiving is locking onto God who is then embraced in an act of faith, which empowers the process of growth in love.

By contrast with the deep anthropomorphic symbols of Christianity in which God is personified as a lover, Confucianism, including Tu's representation, stays with a cool appeal to embodied principle. Christian personification of God is difficult to sustain in the world of late-modern science and intercultural skepticism. Confucianism has an advantage in this regard. But the question for Tu is whether the cool model of a humane person is sufficient to break through the common alienation from the self and fuel an existential commitment. This is a genuine question to which there is no ready answer. Perhaps Tu would say no more than Augustine about the leap of faith.

This chapter has been a study of a preeminent Confucian thinker of our time, the leading thinker of the Boston Confucians. It has pointed out the relevance of his thought for the Western problematic of existential alienation in the modern world and shown how Confucianism has a vast range of resources to bring to that issue. But at the same time, by indirection this chapter has indicated two points on which Boston Confucianism needs to look to Western resources. The first is the fruitfulness of connecting Confucian ritual theory with American pragmatism, a point made earlier but here integrated with Tu's theory of humaneness. The second is the more religious issue of conversion, or the overcoming of alienation so as to tap into the ontological foundations of love or humaneness. If one is seriously alienated, it is not clear that the commitment to overcome alienation is possible without some extra intervention.

Such interventions Christians call grace, and Tu declines to adopt a Christian notion of grace. To be sure, there are many such Christian conceptions, and they are not mutually consistent. But it would seem that this ancient Christian problematic is one that Tu's contemporary Confucianism needs to investigate. Or has his early existential thinking overstated the seriousness of alienation? Many contemporary Confucians would say so. But then, how would those bland sages account for the fact that people are so devoid of humaneness if principle indeed is an innate gift of heaven? Perhaps they would back away from that ontological formulation. But then they would have

abandoned the ancient Confucian commitments to heaven and the dao in favor of what in our time is little more than developmental psychology. Tu Weiming is faithful to the strong roots of the Confucian classics.

The potential complementarity of Confucianism and Christianity on matters of the ontology of the moral person and the goodness of creation, appearances of alienation notwithstanding, is epitomized in Zhang Zai's famous "Western Inscription," which begins:

> Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst. Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions. The great ruler (the emperor) is the eldest son of my parents (Heaven and Earth), and the great ministers are his stewards. Respect the aged—this is the way to treat them as elders should be treated. Show deep love toward the orphaned and the weak—this is the way to treat them as the young should be treated. The sage identifies his character with that of those who are tired, infirm, crippled, or sick; those who have no brothers or children, wives or husbands, are all my brothers who are in distress and have no one to turn to. When the time comes, to keep himself from harm—this is the care of a son. To rejoice in Heaven and to have no anxiety—this is filial piety at its purest. (in Chan 1963, 497)

The religious question for our time is how to recover this filial piety.