

the Mendicant

A PUBLICATION OF THE CENTER FOR ACTION AND CONTEMPLATION

Can Money Serve Our Transition from Ego to Soul?

DOUGLAS TSOI

Recently, I listened to an interview in which Fr. Richard Rohr talks about Carl Jung's two halves of life:

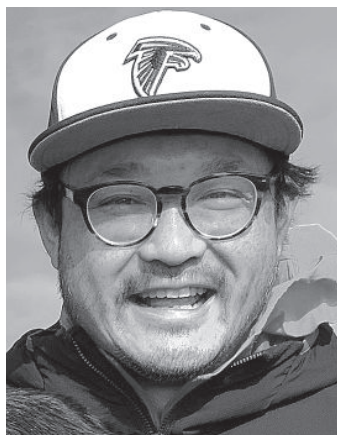
[In the first half] you're building your ego structure, ...your sense of self. You've got to have a few successes.... But if you spend too much time creating your ego structure, you think that's the only task there is. This is our mania for being rich, for being famous, for living in the right part of town, or for things like driving a big car.

We're a society with a lot of elderly people but not a lot of elders, because we have elderly people who are still living in the first half of life. I'm not trying to be moralistic. I'm just talking in terms of the Soul.¹

"We're a society with a lot of elderly people but not a lot of elders." That really caught me. Baby Boomers own 50 percent of the country's \$156 trillion in assets, and Gen Xers own another 30 percent. What will happen to these assets if we never move from ego to Soul—and what could happen if we do?

Like so many Boomers and Xers, I hold onto "my" money to protect my ego. My internal not-enoughness is my resistance. It's easy to say that an ego wants more money, rank, privilege, wealth, and status. For me, these are simply strategies to fulfill a deeper need: to feel OK, to feel safe. To be an ego is to live with a deep insecurity.

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a bigger "we." Spiritual teacher Adyashanti puts it this way: "Most people want to remain separate and in control.... They want to remain separate more than they want to wake up to the perfect unity... which leaves no room for any separation from the whole."²

Separateness is the very thing a first-half-of-life culture promotes. And spirituality is a journey of surrender, dying to yourself and everything you thought was you, to be reborn to something greater, a "we." It's learning that this life is a team game.

If our journey of surrender doesn't change how we relate to our money, what has really changed? Are we like the rich young man in Matthew 19, so earnest yet so afraid, still living the first half of life and declining the real work of transformation?

The world is in significant need of repair. It needs us to move from ego to Soul, from me to we, to become instruments of God's grace. It needs the elderly

to become elders, stewards of a more beautiful world we know is possible. I believe that we Boomers and Xers can use our trillions to create a world where there is enough for everyone. We need to start now.

To build this world of enough-for-everyone, we must let go of our fear of not-enoughness. This is the soul work of transformation, grace, surrender. It's trusting in the slow work of God, of becoming "we."

We start with a change in narrative, a change in how we see ourselves. I believe this is the work of the CAC, inviting us into a story of a more beautiful world that will happen if we surrender *me* to we. Then there is no

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Contemplation, Community, and Commitment

I do not remember when I first heard Fr. Richard Rohr speak, but I do remember how it felt—as if he were speaking truth that my inmost being craved, and I wanted and needed to hear more of it. The issue was not that I was unchurched. It was, I realized, that I had been badly churched, that there was so much more meaning and love in the scriptures than I ever knew.

Through reading Fr. Richard's books and listening to his talks, I found my way to the CAC and the Daily Meditations, which introduced me to an ever-widening circle of writers, many of whom have become favorites, whose words also spoke to that innermost place within. Over time, with their spiritual guidance, I have developed a regular—at this point, I would say, essential—daily contemplative practice.



I now see through a larger lens of hope and trust that God is at work in the world and that communities like the CAC are participating with God in this work.

This practice has been further bolstered by the wisdom conveyed through the *Turning to the Mystics* podcast. My contemplative practice has led me through the journey of order, disorder, reorder over and over again. I have no doubt that I would have fallen away when the process became painful had these wise teachers not encouraged me to learn to trust and allow it to change me.

The path of contemplation, fed by my morning encounters with the Daily Meditations, leads me deeper within and expands me outward so that I feel my connection to the whole creation. This allows me to see the divine spark within the people I encounter. It feeds the fire for the volunteer work I do and restores me to go out and do it again. It provides a grounding place that can withstand setbacks and heartache. It also creates such an intimacy with the Divine that I know, with absolutely certainty, that God loves me and all creation infinitely.

Contemplation has changed my perception. I now see through a larger lens of hope and trust that God is at work in the world and that communities like the CAC are participating with God in this work. The spiritual guidance I receive through the offerings of the CAC is transforming me daily. I continue to attend church, but it is the contemplative path that the CAC teaches and nurtures that truly feeds and sustains me.

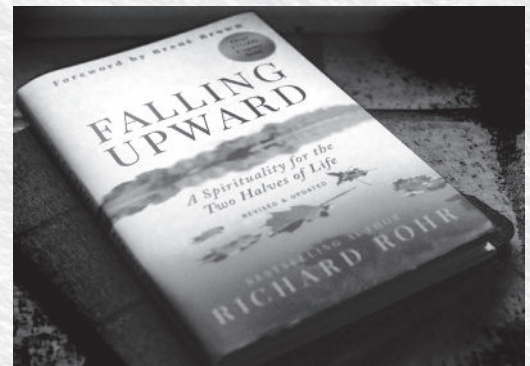
For these reasons, I support the work of the CAC with my monthly donation as part of the Bonaventure Circle of Support. Based on the postings of members of the Daily Meditations Facebook group, the listeners who send in questions to the *Turning to the Mystics* podcast, and the participants in the online classes, I know that mine is by far not the only fire that has been lit by these teachings. It is a worldwide community of little fires that welcomes those of all faiths and no faith, just as God does.

Cheri Crockett is a retired CPA living in St. Charles, Missouri. She is actively involved in volunteer work for a nonprofit organization that promotes voting, voter education, and civic engagement. She and her husband also coordinate their church's self-service pantry. Cheri enjoys reading, yoga, hanging out with friends and family, walks, and (usually!) their lovable dog Odin, who can be a bit of a pill.

Falling Upward:

A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life, Revised and Updated

In the revised and updated edition of *Falling Upward* featuring a new foreword from Brené Brown, Richard Rohr seeks to help readers come to terms with the two halves of life. In this book, Rohr teaches us that we can't understand the meaning of "up" until we have fallen "down." More importantly, Rohr describes what "up" can look like in the second half of life. This new edition focuses on practical guidance that you can use to live a life of love and meaning in a world of suffering and challenge. Immerse your journey in wisdom and practices for spiritual growth and maturity. Available at store.cac.org.



One Communal Exchange

I still remember opening the acceptance letter into the CAC Living School’s 2019 cohort. I was standing at my small, caster-wheeled kitchen island, and the excitement of stepping into the beginning of something meaningful hung alive in the room.

If I’m being honest, though, it was the moment I realized I’d also been approved to receive financial support that moved me. I’d made the request knowing it was probably not clear why the support was necessary; some of the reasons were complex, private. The gratitude that arose in me in response to that unexpected “yes” brought with it an acute awareness of my own participation in what I came to understand as a deeper flow of gift. It was only later, when I recognized that very same sense of participation as I gave back into the flow, that I truly understood how we are all receivers of something priceless from a Larger Source. These are just two of the many gifts that came from that generous opening to participate in the program.

Now that I serve on CAC’s Executive Leadership Team as our Managing Director of Finance, those experiences continue to inspire how I approach my role in leading the stewardship of our financial resources. When we first took on the work of articulating our commitment to values and mission-aligned financial management in 2020, one of the core tenets on which we grounded our work was a conviction that **spiritual wisdom is a public, universal good** and should be offered in a way that preserves communal participation. That commitment has informed many decisions, including how we offer our programs—with financial accessibility as a top priority. Whether that be through providing programs fully in the gift like our Daily Meditations,

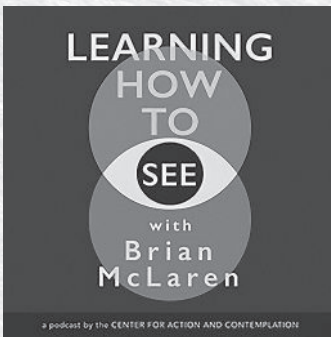
offering flexible pricing options for virtual events, or granting generous scholarship support for the Living School and Online Courses, utilizing our financial resources in a way that prioritizes access ensures that all who desire to participate can engage with our work.



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We have a greater opportunity than ever to continue to advance this important work and to do so in a way that collapses all **giving and receiving into one communal exchange of gift**. The generosity of our donors begets the generosity and participation of others. I sit in gratitude at having been a participant in the flow of gift as a result of your generosity.

Cindy Kröll joined the CAC in 2019 as the Managing Director of Finance and Business Analytics. She is a 2019 Living School sendee and has also served on CAC’s Finance Committee. Cindy lives in Bloomington, Minnesota with her two children, Kaitlyn and Evan.



Learning How to See

Do you ever feel afraid or overwhelmed when creation is hurting? You’re not alone! From birding to botany to black holes, CAC Dean of Faculty Brian McLaren explores nature and faith in a new season of *Learning How to See*. Hear from scientists, eco-theologians, and activists at the intersection of science and spirituality. Discover how we can restore damage and protect creation in *Learning How to See*.

Learn more at cac.org/podcast/learning-how-to-see.

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Guideposts on the Camino

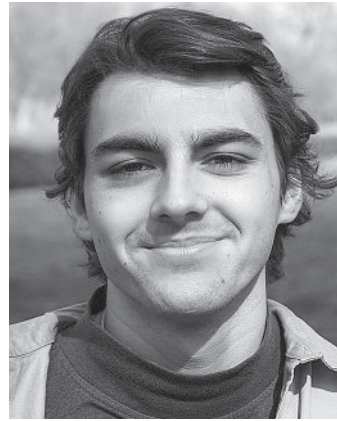
As with most young Americans today, I recently entered the workforce carrying more anxiety, choice paralysis, and fear than I was prepared for. Growing up in the age of technology, it has been natural for us to create various expressions of self (both false and true versions), making it difficult to be squeezed into a work system that seemingly doesn't have space for our ideas, expressions, and intolerance of injustice.

However, I received an invitation into liminal space with the opportunity to graduate from college a semester early in December 2022. As I reflected upon my COVID-ridden college experience, which offered many gifts of intimate community but limited the expansion of my perspective, I was inspired to take a trip abroad. I knew this was not a trip for tourism but for soul searching and to grow this perspective as I transitioned into a new chapter. God had placed a longing inside me for something I knew I had to learn through experience. Searching for structure for this journey, I encountered the Camino de Santiago and began my pilgrimage in February 2023.

In all my excitement and inspiration, I failed to comprehend how truly isolating and disorienting walking 500 miles in a foreign country would be. Luckily, during my year of preparation, I came across Richard Rohr's work through a podcast he did with Rob Bell and subscribed to Fr. Richard's Daily Meditations. This exposure to the contemplative way gave me words to name the mystical experiences I was having: entering a liminal space of unknowing, not just on the Camino but within my life as I left the comfort of my college experience.

I sensed beforehand that I was to listen only to the whispers of God while there. This caused feelings of unfamiliarity and confusion—about who I am and who God is—to intensify during my journey. But as the noise of my

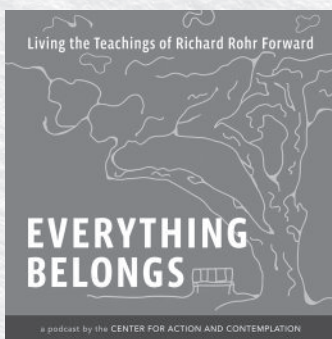
mind rose during my isolated walking, the Daily Meditations became a place of grounding and the very whisper I was invited to hear. During my five weeks on the Camino, two of the weekly themes were the Desert Mystics and Pilgrimage, which served as guideposts to my practice and contemplative learning as I lived the very path the themes explored.



I joined the Bonaventure Circle of Support... because of CAC's placement as a divine light post during my pilgrimage.

When I returned home and began working full-time, I decided to start giving to the CAC. I joined the Bonaventure Circle of Support not only because of CAC's placement as a divine light post during my pilgrimage, but also because it authentically guides my generation into the God experience we deeply desire but too often don't perceive through the dominant methods of the Western church. I look forward to the expansion of support for the CAC's vision of a more just and connected world that includes my generation.

Braxton Martorano is a resident of Indianapolis and recent graduate of Butler University, where he designed a racial equity workshop based in storytelling, served as a ministry leader, and studied economics. He now works to support small, disadvantaged businesses at the Indy Chamber of Commerce.



Everything Belongs

Join us for a new podcast that explores Fr. Richard's foundational teachings through the eyes of his closest friends. Through conversations with Brené Brown, Paula D'Arcy, CAC staff, and Fr. Richard Rohr, discover the peace that comes from embodying contemplative wisdom in your daily life. This podcast will explore how to continue your spiritual journey when your needs are no longer met and discover how to co-create a world where everything and everyone belongs. New episodes of *Everything Belongs* stream each week! Subscribe to *Everything Belongs* on your favorite podcast player or listen online at cac.org/podcasts.

Expanding the Circle of Support

BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO (1217–1274), a Doctor of the Church, philosopher, and mystic, helped bring Francis of Assisi’s intuitive spirituality to philosophical and theological heights. For Bonaventure, **the perfection of God and God’s creation moves full circle**, which is the meaning of resurrection. He discerned that Alpha and Omega had to be the same, and the lynchpin holding it all together was the “Christ Mystery” visible everywhere—the essential unity of matter and spirit, humanity and divinity.

For both Francis and Bonaventure, God is not an offended monarch on a throne throwing down thunderbolts, but a “fountain fullness” that flows,

overflows, and fills all things. **Reality is thus participatory; it is love itself.** God as Trinitarian Flow is the blueprint and pattern for all relationships and all of creation.

“Before the world was made, God chose us, chose us in Christ” (Ephesians 1:4). The problem was solved from the beginning. Any gospel of hope must start with the “original blessing” announced in Genesis 1 instead of the problem described in Genesis 3. It invites us beyond the negative notion of history as being a “fall from grace” to the long and **positive view of history as a slow emergence/ evolution into ever-greater consciousness.**

—Richard Rohr¹

In the spirit of the cosmically hopeful worldview of Francis and Bonaventure, CAC is inviting you to join the Bonaventure Circle of Support, a community of people who are working together to help awaken a more loving and just world. The Bonaventure Circle is the CAC’s community of monthly givers who are committed to the healing of our world through expanding the impact of the Christian contemplative traditions.

To join, you start by making a small but meaningful monthly donation, which can be as low as only a few dollars per month. Combined with the gifts of other people around the world, your donations provide the dependable resources CAC needs to expand our efforts to share the message of cosmic hope without finances being the barrier to access for any sincere seeker. To learn more about the Bonaventure Circle and how you can support the growth

and expansion of CAC’s work, visit CAC.org/bonaventure.

We are so grateful for all of you—including Cindy, Douglas, Cheri, and Braxton—who give freely and cheerfully to advance this work. The articles in this issue are a small sample of the stories shared by wonderful, humble, and committed people like you who are walking together on this full-circle path we call life.



—Ben Keeseey

Director of Development and Strategic Partnerships

¹ Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi* (Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2014), 163, 164–165.

Can Money Serve Our Transition from Ego to Soul?

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scarcity. There is no shortage. If we let go of our tight grip on money, there is more than enough for all. Only fear makes us think otherwise. Let go.

We are instruments of God’s grace. From *me* to *we*, as good of a definition of God as I could imagine. Baby Boomers and Gen Xers, \$120 trillion. What now? Can our money serve our transition from ego to Soul?

Surrender is hard. I’m trying. You too? There is joy in this.

All spirituality, a team game. This life, a team game.

¹ Richard Rohr, “Leading with Love with Richard Rohr,” *The Leadercast Podcast*, July 11, 2023.

² Adyashanti, *The Impact of Awakening: Excerpts from the Teachings of Adyashanti* (Markleeville, CA: Open Gate Sangha, 2002), 118.

Douglas Tsoi is a Franciscan spiritual director who offers financial-spiritual coaching. He writes about the intersection of personal finance and spirituality on the Substack newsletter Money and Meaning. He can be found at www.douglastsoi.com.



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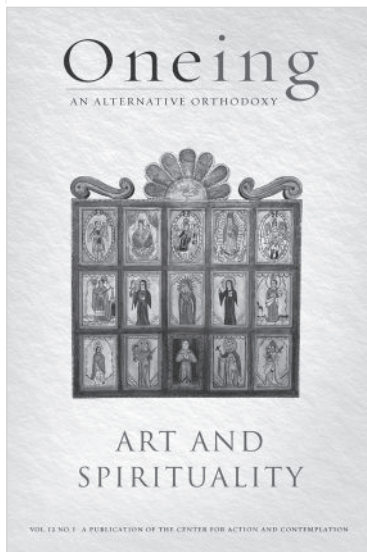
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We also invite you to remember CAC in your estate plan. For more information about making a charitable contribution, including stock transfers and bequests, please email development@cac.org.

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ONEING: Art and Spirituality

The Spring 2024 issue of *Oneing* on "Art and Spirituality" features art, articles, and poetry that invite readers to reflect on the transformative power of the arts. Featuring contributors like Scott Avett, Lourdes Bernard, Richard Rohr, Catherine Dowling, and more, this issue of *Oneing* invites readers to explore the spiritual gifts of joy and suffering through images, poetry, and prose. Explore the way art can be an expansive experience that offers us respite and contemplation as the issue shares powerful, inspiring, or difficult stories with the power to change us. We invite you to enjoy the many exciting contributions in this issue as if they were a hologram of a work of art. Available at store.cac.org.