

Spirituality in the Perennial Wisdom Traditions

Lectures and Workshops by Alan Berkowitz

Alan David Berkowitz has been a student at Wisdom's Goldenrod Center for Philosophic Studies in Hector, N.Y. for over thirty years, where he studied the perennial wisdom traditions with its founder, Anthony Damiani, and where he has taught classes and workshops, served on the Board of Directors, and lived as a resident. He has also served as the Chairperson, Secretary and member of the Paul Brunton Philosophical Foundation. Towards the end of Paul Brunton's life Alan served for a brief period of time as his personal assistant. He is a nationally recognized expert in the fields of drug prevention, social norms, sexual assault prevention, and prejudice reduction and has won five national awards for his work in these areas. In addition to Wisdom's Goldenrod and Anthony Damiani, Alan and his wife Gran are connected to the work of Trigueirinho in Brazil, Carol Parish-Harrah in the United States, Boulent in Turkey, and Raphael in Italy. Alan has offered lectures and workshops at the Figueira community in Brazil, Sancta Sophia Seminary in Talhequah, Oklahoma, the Philosopher's Stone Book Store in Columbus, Ohio, Ashram Vidya in Italy, the Open Center in New York City, the Ithaca Jung Society, the Rochester Folk Art Guild and at numerous Churches and faith communities.

1. An Introduction to Jungian Depth Psychology in Light of Spiritual Teachings.

Jungian psychology provides important tools for the psychological development that is an integral part of spiritual seeking. This seminar provides a basic overview of important Jungian ideas and addresses their philosophical and spiritual implications.

2. Introduction to the Life and Writings of Paul Brunton: Pioneer of the Modern Western Esoteric Tradition. Paul Brunton was a pioneer who brought meditation and many Eastern teachings to the West and who reformulated the Perennial Wisdom into a teaching that is accessible to the modern Western sentiment and consistent with recent scientific understanding. This session provides a brief overview of his life and writings.

3. Spiritual Transformation in Alchemy: The Symbolism of the Rosarium Philosophorum. In alchemy we find a profound symbolic outline of the stages and transformations that take place in the course of spiritual unfoldment, along with an understanding of the energy processes that accompany them. These states and processes are illustrated using the plates from the Rosarium Philosophorum (Note: The first ten of these plates formed the basis of Jung's essay: The Psychology of the Transference)

4. Fundamentals of Spiritual Systems. This lecture series provides an overview of fundamental ideas and concepts shared by most spiritual teachings and philosophies. For example, the idea of the quest or path, the doctrine of the subtle body, meditation, the power of symbols, mind's creative power/ creative imagination, universal archetypes and ideas, levels of reality, etc. are pivotal in systems such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Platonism, Alchemy, Kaballah, Sufism, Paul Brunton, Anthony Damiani, Jung, etc.

5. Life Without the Teacher: Reflections on the Student-Teacher Relationship. The death of my own teacher, Anthony Damiani, has caused me to think deeply about the nature of this important relationship and how it changes when the teacher is no longer physically present. How does one's relationship to a teacher change after her or his death? How does this affect one's practice and relationship to fellow students? How can we cope with the loss of such an important figure and what are the psychological issues that come up as a result?

6. Eros in the Student Teacher Relationship. Recent literature on the student-teacher relationship has focused on its negative or shadow side while overlooking its positive aspect. Problems between student and teacher may in part result from misunderstandings of the relationship and confusion about how to handle it. One of the most problematic subjects is that of Eros. When Eros manifests between student and teacher it is often misunderstood. What is Eros and what is its relationship to sexuality? What are its positive and negative manifestations? How can Eros be expressed constructively between student and teacher? This presentation utilizes material from a variety of psychological and spiritual traditions to shed light on this aspect of discipleship, as well as to talk more broadly about how I understand the relationship between student and teacher.

7. Jung's Theory of Projection: Psychological and Philosophical Implications Projection is a pivotal concept in Jungian psychology. This seminar explores Jung's theory of projection, explores common understandings and misunderstandings, and concludes with a discussion of its philosophical implications for a theory of mind.

8. Negotiating Difficult Boundaries: Issues of Distance and Closeness in the Helping Relationship. All of us struggle with issues of closeness and distance in relationships and at times these issues become problematic in our role as helpers. This session takes an honest look at the dynamics, issues and human needs that are part of any helping relationship to illuminate why boundary violations of any kind occur and when we are either at risk of committing them or of overlooking the ethical misconduct of colleagues.

9. Methodologies for Transforming and Transcending the Ego. The practice of "spiritual technologies" requires that we consider who or what is being transformed, and for what purpose? In this class we will look at the nature and functions of the ego-self and how it is both the vehicle for spiritual development and also the primary obstacle to this development. Transformational practices from a variety of spiritual traditions will be examined from this dual perspective of development and transcendence.

10. East and/or West: Contemporary Spirituality. What are the needs of contemporary spiritual seekers and to what extent do Eastern and Western spiritual systems fulfill these needs? How important is it to make a commitment to one tradition or path? What happens when Westerners ignore our own traditions and go “east?” These questions are explored in this lecture and the notion of an “independent path” is presented.

11. The Nature and Function of Symbols – Gateways to Other Realities. Symbols can exert a powerful influence on the psyche and serve as a gateway into the unknown. This lecture/workshop explores the psychological and spiritual function of symbols and provides a map of the various levels of reality that they can point to.

12. Living in the World in Peace – A Spiritual Approach to Non-Violence. How can we bring peace to the world? Inner peace is a condition of outer peace. What does it mean to be “at peace?” What is the source of peace and how should we live in the world in such a way as to bring peace to ourselves and others? This talk looks at the topic of peace and non-violence and provides suggestions for how to make them a reality in our lives.

13. Finding your Own Path. What are the necessary elements of a spiritual path and how can we create one that works for ourselves and that is adapted to modern lives and realities? This talk draws from the ancient perennial wisdom traditions and suggests elements of a spiritual path that are necessary for all seekers.

14. Yoga’s Wisdom Teachings. Traditionally, Yoga is more than a physical practice – it is a deeper philosophy and a way of life. This talk examines the assumptions and practices of Yoga and how they relate to “hatha yoga” or the Yoga of the body. Yoga is traditionally seen as transformational spiritual path and not, as has become common, simply as a quest for physical well-being. Come learn what it means to be a true “yogi.”

15. Conscious Masculinity. Contemporary examinations of gender have taught us what is problematic about the masculine and how it has related negatively to the feminine. We have embraced the possibility of a divine feminine that will help us re-connect with ourselves and save us from destroying the planet. Yet, there is almost no discussion of the possibility of a divine masculine, and what that might look like. How can we find the divine masculine within ourselves and understand how our relationships with others can help us to develop, express, and integrate them?

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Lecture and Workshop Participant Comments

Alan Berkowitz, Ph.D. www.alanberkowitz.com

“Alan Berkowitz is a well-loved speaker, known for his wealth of knowledge and warm and engaging manner. He is a noted scholar, researcher and public speaker who is passionate about enhancing and promoting social justice, health and well-being in our hearts, homes and communities”.

“The presenter was excellent in all areas. His presentation met the objectives of the program in an exceptional manner; it was clear, organized and relevant to my life. I was challenged by his presentation and ideas; I feel enriched in having attended.”

“Dr. Berkowitz’s mind-expanding lecture on “Contemporary Spirituality: East and/or West,” was clearly and professionally presented. Even the beginner could grasp profound truths underlying the major religions and modern psychological thought. His objective, unifying approach helped me to move into a much needed space, where spirituality embraces all, regardless of their religious affiliation.”

“The breadth and depth of Dr. Berkowitz’s knowledge is truly astounding, as is his ability to present these ideas in meaningful lay-persons terms. Wow!!”

“Alan is an outstanding Presenter and an exceptional listener and in the process ‘pulls/includes’ the participants into the programs as he presents them.”

“Alan’s relaxed and informal style was just what I was looking for. I felt comfortable asking questions, and his responses were easy to follow. This presenter has obviously made the understanding gained through extensive education and experience his own. He knows his stuff.”

“I find Alan’s presentations hold my interest; he adds depth and clarity to the subject matter. - He has a wonderful ability to connect with his audience. - He is natural, open, and real as a person and as a presenter.”

I have taken many classes with Alan, and talked with him on many topics. He is very knowledgeable on many subjects both philosophical and worldly, is sincere in his desire to help others, and somehow magically creates lasting, personal connections to those he teaches. He is also patient and kind and a practiced listener, making a supportive and positive learning environment.