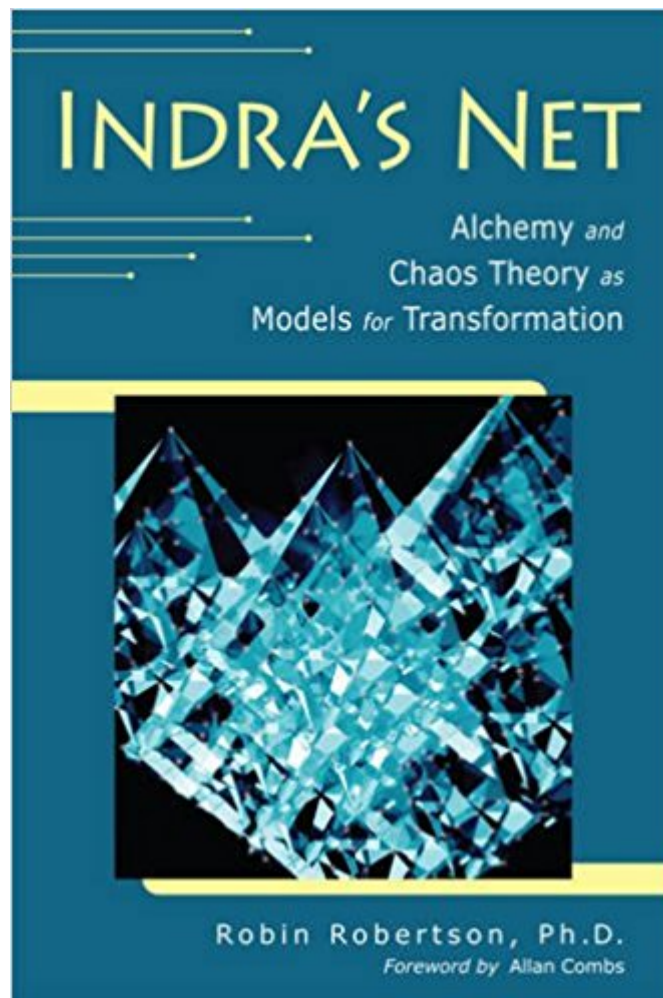




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# Indra's Net: Alchemy And Chaos Theory As Models For Transformation



## Synopsis

In this clear, engaging book, Robin Robertson draws parallels between alchemy and chaos theory and shows how to apply them to our inner development. He is not proposing they replace traditional spiritual paths, but rather that they reflect deep structures in the psyche that any inner journey awakens. The model they provide necessarily underlies all paths of spiritual transformation and describes a framework for the stages through which any seeker goes. No matter what your particular calling, these insights enrich understanding of the transformative process, whether outside in the world, or within your life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Robin Robertson has a knack for grasping the pure quill in our crazy-making daily whirl. Indra's Net is magical, because readers will learn more about themselves than about Indra, alchemy or chaos theory." --Daryl Sharp, Jungian analyst, Publisher, Inner City Books

"I greatly appreciated Robin's scholarly historic presentation. As a Jungian and mathematician, it is not surprising that Robin has culminated his writing career on mysticism, myth, mathematics, and metamorphosis with this fusion of chaos theory and alchemy. Besides illuminating these subjects very lucidly, he draws lessons from self-organization. I would place this book, along with R. Abraham's Chaos, Gaia, Eros, and Peterson's Newton's Clock as the most important and enjoyable books on the history and implications of chaos theory." --Fred Abraham, PhD, Co-founder of the Society for Chaos Theory in Psychology, and co-author of A Visual Introduction to Dynamical Systems Theory for Psychology

"Robin Robertson has one of those minds that range over disparate models of reality,

see their affinities, intuit their implications, and bring them home to us with clarity and with deep feeling. That he can also link up these various forms and elements with the deep sources of transforming archetypal energy within each of us is still another priceless gift." --James Hollis, Ph.D., Jungian analyst and author of *What Matters Most: Living a More Considered Life*"Chaos theory and the arcane symbolism of alchemy conjoin in Robin Robertson's new take on personal transformation. Always engaging and lucid, Robertson pursues strange attractors and the philosopher's stone through the outer world of pre and post science into the inner world of psyche. Elegant descriptions, up-to-date analogies, and personal reflections enrich and enliven Robertson's unfolding themes. He synthesizes alchemic mystery, mathematics and psyche with profound simplicity, re-affirming his mastery of this genre" --Barry Jeromson, Ph.D., has taught Philosophy and Jung Studies at the University of South Australia"In Indra's Netb, Dr. Robin Robertson articulates with an uncommon clarity and erudition both modern chaos theory and alchemy. Taking apart and contrasting insights from these models of transformation, he then puts them together to foster an original contribution to our understanding of change in our souls. This jewel of a book illuminates the unpredictable detours of individuation." --Christophe Le Mou  l, Ph.D., Executive Director, C.G. Jung Institute of Los Angeles

Robin Robertson has spent a life-time bridging the worlds of science, psychology and the arts. He has worked as a clinical psychologist, mathematician, and actuary; within the computer field, he's been a systems analyst, software designer, computer executive and consultant. He has separate undergraduate degrees in mathematics and English literature, as well as an M.A. in counseling psychology, and a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. Robin has written fourteen books and more than a hundred articles, often connected with Jungian psychology or the relationship between psychology and science, which have gone through multiple printings, new editions, and foreign translations. Since 1986, he's been a writer, editor, columnist and editorial board member of the Jungian journal *Psychological Perspectives*. He has also been heavily involved with the applications of chaos theory in psychology as a writer, editor, speaker, and officer of the "Society for Chaos Theory in Psychology and the Life Sciences." And, in more recent years, he's been a consulting editor and contributor for the cybernetics journal *Cybernetics & Human Knowing* (a journal that looks at deep issues about the nature of reality). Regardless of the area he's dealing with, he writes and speaks about complex ideas in clear, nontechnical language. He is a life-time amateur magician, and a member of the Order of Merlin of the International Brotherhood of Magicians, who has published five magic books and many original effects, in recent years often collaborating with the Scottish

magician, Peter Duffie.

An interesting premise, with the idea that transforming one's self has parallels in the scientific theory of chaos and the ancient art of alchemy. Each chapter explores a concept that is found in chaos, alchemy, and transformation. That concept is then discussed in each of those contexts. The goal is to provide insights into the process of self transformation, thus guiding one along the path of Jung's individuation. In some cases the search for parallels is a bit contrived, but on the whole the parallels are intriguing and illuminating, thus providing a novel take on the subject of growth of the individual. Totally aside from the primary purpose of this book, you can also read this as an engaging primer on alchemy, which it turns out is/was far more than a mercenary activity and was actually a deeply philosophical pursuit. "Metals were believed to be living organisms that slowly developed and changed within the body of the earth, much as a baby grows within a woman's belly."

I read this book after reading an excerpt from it here: [...] which I found to be exceptionally well written. Overall, I think the book is an essential read for anyone interested in chaos theory or occult ideas. Robertson combines the two seamlessly to illustrate a spiritual journey we all face, and the stages inherent therein. Well done. Also, I was happy it wasn't full of technical jargon that went over my head - I understood it well and the presentation concepts followed a natural progression - I read the whole book in a day.

Excellent integration of science and spirit. Great history on alchemy and how chaos theory and alchemy relate to personal transformation.

Self-transformation is the most important challenge we face as humans. The growing complexity of modern crises require a new breed of human thinking that few are willing to embrace. Because of these challenges, I was intrigued by the idea of Dr. Robin Robertson's Indra's Net, combining the mathematics of chaos theory and the mythological language of alchemy to serve as models for an individual transformational path. Few embark on this path and many who do are bogged down by approaches that are too often steeped with pseudoscience or empty metaphors. In walking my own path, I've tried to focus on readings that pay special attention to the development of the higher self while avoiding the language of "self-help" or scientific concepts evoked with little understanding. Much of the mystique surrounding our modern perception of alchemy is primarily because we view alchemy as a primitive ill-informed version of chemistry. By dispelling this myth early on in Indra's

Net, Robertson removed my concerns that his book would be innocuous commentary on the human condition decorated with fanciful mysticism. Even Isaac Newton, who viewed the scientific world as one of absolutes, used alchemical models to reveal the dynamic processes defining our world. Alchemy has always been a process of transforming Man, a constant process of refining the individual to reveal the "golden" potential, not transforming Pb into Au. While alchemy was an ancient method of modeling the dynamics of the human condition, chaos theory is the modern equivalent of modeling dynamic realities. When combined, alchemy and chaos math reveal many nuances critical to our growth as we seek to express our authentic human nature. The use of mythological symbols are highly relevant because they represent the mechanisms of the unconscious as much now as they did in the past. I was particularly struck by Robertson's description of the uroboros, the deeply ingrained archetype of the snake eating its own tail, to represent the process of feeding back information into the individual for a constant transformational process. The uroboros represents that the end is contained within the beginning, all too often we transform over a lifetime to find our inner child looking right back at us in the mirror. Additionally, when examining feedback as a model for transformation we see that there is no short way to subvert the process, we must work over the same issues at a deeper and deeper level. By seeking to transcend our current broken state we fail to probe the depths of human existence. Trying to amputate the dark sides of our nature we are like a rope that continually cuts its end off, the rope gets shorter and shorter, and as a human we become shallower and shallower. The full spectrum of human existence must be appreciated in its entire context. In addition to feedback, Indra's Net adapts emergence onto the path of personal challenge. Striving to adapt our lives to specific equations for success is a common focus for modern humans. Go to college + get a job + gain skills = make more and more money. Yet at some undetermined point everything can, and usually does change without any specific reason. Building a network of probability through interactions with an external world only increases the opportunity for our inner self to emerge at a spontaneous point. If we think life will continue down a pre-determined route, ignoring the little dissatisfaction accumulating underneath, they eventually emerge into a devastating climax. This manifests commonly as the stereotypical midlife crisis in American culture but we all undergo many such crises (but at smaller magnitudes) on a frequent basis. I was impressed with Robertson's writing and the succinctness of his message, at 147 pages Indra's Net covers all its bases but doesn't drone on unnecessarily like many books in the genre of self-work. At a time when many in the US have opportunities to re-evaluate their presence at 40+ hour a week jobs where making money means doing something with little fulfillment, Indra's Net can provide the tools for recognizing the inner self.

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