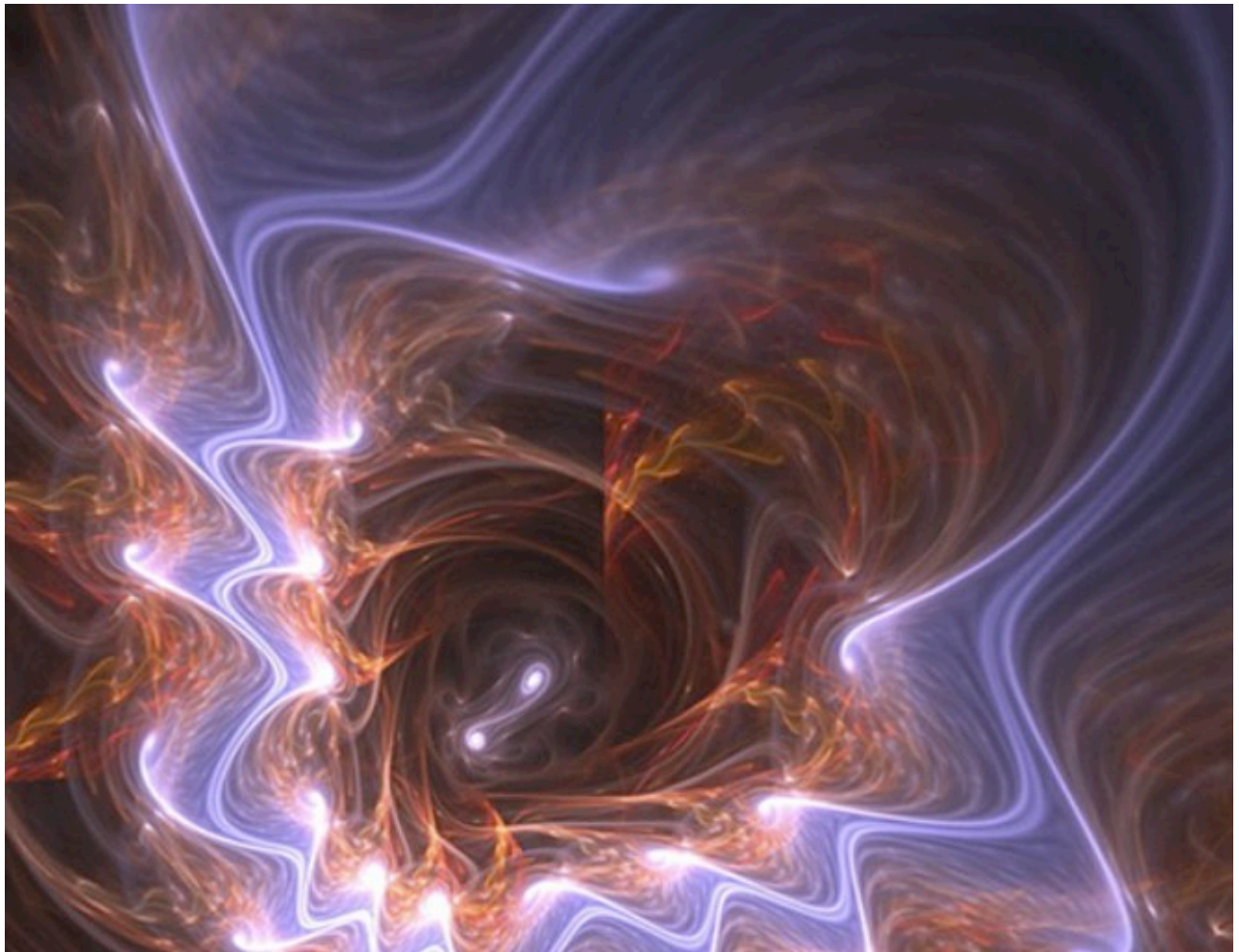


# THE ALCHEMY OF AWARENESS

The Transmutation of Ignorance Into Wisdom



by  
Terry Findlay

## Credits

Cover Image: "Moving Toward the Consciousness" by Exper Giovanni Rubaltelli  
Reproduced under the Creative Commons License.

---

This electronic version of The Alchemy of Awareness is offered in PDF format. This document format can be read using Adobe Reader, Apple's Preview, or any other PDF reader.

## Bookmarks

In Apple's Preview you can set bookmarks as you read. This allows you to keep track of where you left off reading or to store the location of any text to which you may want to return.

To set a bookmark go to the location in the document where you want to set the bookmark. From the Bookmark menu choose Add Bookmark. Enter a name for the bookmark and click the Add button.

To go to a previously set bookmark select the bookmark from the Bookmarks menu.

## Website

[www.alchemyofawareness.net](http://www.alchemyofawareness.net)

## Table of Contents

Prologue: The Problem	p. 6
The Alchemy of Awareness	p. 8
The Need for The Alchemy of Awareness	p. 9
Developmental Stages/Levels	p. 9
Seeking Solutions	p. 11
Can We Change?	p. 12
Neuroplasticity	p. 12
Mindsets	p. 13
Two Thinking Systems	p. 14
The Alchemy of Awareness: A Fundamental Formula	p. 15
A Picture of Hope	p. 17
A Brief History of the Brain	p. 18
An Overview of the Evolution of Life on Earth	p. 18
What is a Nervous System	p. 18
Early Nervous Systems	p. 19
Reptilian Nervous Systems	p. 19
Mammalian Nervous Systems	p. 20
The Triune Brain	p. 20
The Downside of Human Brains	p. 20
The Levels of Awareness	p. 22
The Levels of Awareness	p. 22
Caveats	p. 22
What is Awareness?	p. 22
Ignorance	p. 23
Expanding Wisdom	p. 23
Getting Acquainted	p. 24
A Little Knowledge is a Dangerous Thing	p. 26
Evolution or Revolution?	p. 26
Transitions as Transmutation	p. 28
Transmutation of Ignorance Into Wisdom	p. 29
The Conversion of Subjective Experience Into Objective Knowledge	p. 30
Transitional Realizations	p. 31
Transmutation Through the Levels of Awareness	p. 32
The Alchemy of Awareness: The Formula Revisited	p. 32
The Catalyst of Transmutation	p. 33
Potential for Transition	p. 34
Transition Stages	p. 34

The Early Years: Separation	p. 38
The First Transition	p. 38
From Level 1 to 2	p. 39
From Level 2 to 3	p. 39
No Guarantees	p. 40
The Separation Mechanism	p. 40
Level 3 Awareness: Membership	p. 42
Level 3 Awareness	p. 43
Transmutation at Level 3 Awareness	p. 43
Components of Level 3 Awareness	p. 43
Level 3 Awareness in the World	p. 44
More Examples of Level 3 Awareness in the World	p. 46
The Transition From Level 3 to Level 4 Awareness	p. 47
The Upside of Problems	p. 47
The Wisdom of Level 3	p. 47
The Ignorance of Level 3	p. 47
Stages of Transition - Level 3 to Level 4	p. 48
Level 4 Awareness: Independence	p. 49
Level 4 Awareness	p. 49
Status Anxiety and Level 4 Awareness	p. 50
Components of Level 4 Awareness	p. 51
Level 4 in the World	p. 54
More Examples of Level 4 Awareness in the World	p. 56
The Transition From Level 4 to Level 5 Awareness	p. 57
A Level of Tolerance	p. 57
The Wisdom of Level 4	p. 57
The Ignorance of Level 4	p. 57
Stages of Transition - Level 4 to Level 5	p. 58
Level 5 Awareness: Interdependence	p. 60
Level 5 Awareness	p. 60
Jumping to Conclusions	p. 61
A Broader Perspective on Conflict	p. 62
Components of Level 5 Awareness	p. 64
Level 5 in the World	p. 66
More Examples of Level 5 Awareness in the World	p. 68
The Transition From Level 5 to Level 6 Awareness	p. 69
Transcendence	p. 69
The Wisdom of Level 5	p. 70
The Ignorance of Level 5	p. 70
Stages of Transition - Level 5 to Level 6	p. 70
Level 6 Awareness: Wholeness	p. 71
The Great Work	p. 71

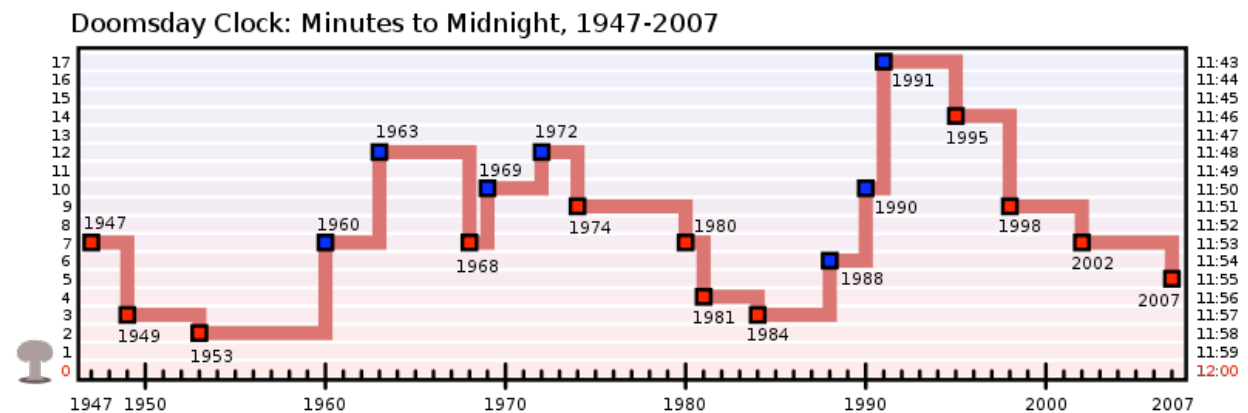
Level 6 Awareness	p. 72
Components of Level 6 Awareness	p. 73
One With the Universe	p. 75
The Persistence of Individuality	p. 76
Innocence	p. 76
Where Are We?	p. 78
Where Are We Now?	p. 78
Getting There	p. 83
Getting From Where We Are to Where We Need To Be	p. 83
Is There A Shortcut?	p. 83
One Step at a Time	p. 84
Resistance to Transition	p. 84
Prerequisites to Transition	p. 85
Aids to Transition	p. 85
Reaching The Limit	p. 85
Preparing the Way	p. 86
Facilitating Transitions	p. 86
How to Proceed	p. 87
The Necessity of Drives	p. 87
Creating a Hopeful Future	p. 88
A Geography of Hope	p. 88
Becoming the Solution: Me to We	p. 89
Worldhanging.com	p. 90
Sustainability Management Course	p. 91
GiveMeaning.com	p. 92
Kiva	p. 93
The Internet as a Tool for Wisdom	p. 94
Other Ways to Connect on the Internet	p. 95
Conclusion	p. 97
The Author	p. 99

## Prologue

“With the help of favorable measures great individuals might be reared who would be both different from and higher than those who heretofore have owed their existence to mere chance. Here we may still be hopeful: in the rearing of exceptional men.”

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

In 1947 the board of directors of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists at the University of Chicago began maintaining the Doomsday Clock. This clock was created to symbolically represent the world’s condition relative to “catastrophic destruction” that could occur should the clock ever reach midnight. At the time of its creation the world was in the midst of the U.S. - U.S.S.R. cold war. Nuclear devastation was an all-too-real scenario at the time. The Doomsday Clock was initially set at 7 minutes to midnight. Since its original inception the Doomsday Clock has come to represent a measure of the severity of nuclear, environmental, and technological threats existing in the world at any given time. The most recent setting of the clock occurred on January 17, 2007. At that time the clock was set to 5 minutes to midnight. This was a move of two minutes closer to midnight than the previous setting made in 2002.



In a statement supporting the decision to move the hand of the Doomsday Clock, the Bulletin Board focused on two major sources of catastrophe: the perils of 27,000 nuclear weapons, 2,000 of them ready to launch within minutes; and the destruction of human habitats from climate change.

*Bulletin of Atomic Sciences website* <http://www.thebulletin.org/content/doomsday-clock/overview>

### The Problem

“Over billions of years on a unique sphere chance has painted a thin covering of life, complex, improbable, wonderful and fragile. Suddenly, we humans, a recently arrived species, no longer subject to the checks and balances inherent in nature have grown in population, technology, and intelligence to a position of terrible power. We now wield the paint brush.”

*Paul McCready*

A look at the graph above makes it painfully clear that, according to the scientists responsible for setting the Doomsday Clock, the current world situation is far from desirable. According to some contemporary experts our species may not survive the 21st century. These experts put our chances of failing to survive this century as follows:

1. John Leslie (author and philosopher) puts the chances of our failure to survive at around 50%
2. Sir Martin Rees (author and astrophysicist) agrees that our chances of failing to survive are around 50%
3. Richard Posner (author and U.S. Court of Appeals Judge) says that the chances of our failure to survive is a “significant probability”.
4. Nick Bostrom (philosopher and founder of the World Transhumanist Assoc.) maintains that the chances of our failure to survive are “not less 20%”.

Clearly, there are those who don't hold out much hope for humanity and there is much in our world today to support such pessimism. Everywhere we look we find evidence of global unrest. We turn on the evening news and are subjected to the latest report of a suicide bomber, a recent gang related murder, violence in faraway places or in the streets of our own cities. Newspaper headlines cry out about hatred, racism, a rise in crime, terrorism, and a plethora of injustices.

If only we could get at the root of these problems we might be able to do something about them. In this book I will attempt to tease out some of the common root causes and to suggest some rather unique solutions. I will attempt to show that a root cause of many of our problems is a deficiency in our personal and collective levels of awareness. As we will discover, what we experience is largely a product of the choices we make and the choices we make are limited to the contents of our awareness. You cannot choose that of which you are unaware. Our ignorance limits us and it is ignorance that provides the fertile ground in which intolerance, indifference, and other troubling human attributes can flourish and from which they can spread their insidious tendrils. If we can dispel some measure of ignorance we might just succeed in eradicating a corresponding measure of suffering.

This book examines the possibility of ameliorating ignorance and, therefore, of encouraging wider perspectives through coming to understand six levels of awareness. Each of the levels of awareness that will be presented offers greater choice and, therefore, greater freedom which, in turn, affords us the possibility of greater hope.

The *alchemy of awareness* described in this book is a naturally occurring process. Individuals can and do move from one level of awareness to another without any idea that various levels of awareness exist or of the dynamics involved in making a transition from one level to the next. But, in light of our present world situation, it seems imprudent to leave the important business of expanding our collective awareness up to chance. Moreover, there is substantial evidence that, left to their own devices, few people ever

reach the level of awareness required to deal with our pressing local and/or global challenges.

It is my hope that this book may facilitate and encourage the movement of individuals through the levels of awareness to a point where they are able to live more liberated lives and, in the process, learn to be more compassionate and to contribute to a more welcoming world.

Fundamentally, this is a book of hope. We will see the reasons for this when we look at the evidence suggesting that groups and individuals are, even now, seeking ways to improve and expand their levels of awareness, of transmuting ignorance into the wisdom required to face the problems we all share.

## **The Alchemy of Awareness**

The Alchemy of Awareness is the story of an alchemy that our brains perform in making a series of life-changing transitions. These transitions are universal throughout the people of the world. The alchemy involved in these transitions occurs naturally and involves none of the supernatural trappings historically associated with the term 'alchemy'. However, there are a number of parallel concepts that exist between the ancient understanding of the word and the form of alchemy that we will be exploring in this book.

The word 'alchemy' derives from the Old French *alkemie* and from the Arabic *al-kimia* meaning "the art of transformation". It is in the spirit of transformation that the term is relevant to the subject of this book. In *The Alchemy of Awareness* we will be examining the power of awareness to transform our selves and, as a result, our world.

Wikipedia describes alchemy thus: "Alchemy (Arabic: *al-khimia*), a part of the Occult Tradition, is both a philosophy and a practice with an aim of achieving ultimate *wisdom* as well as immortality, involving *the improvement of the alchemist* as well as the making of several substances described as possessing unusual properties."

We will discover that the type of wisdom our world so desperately needs is only to be found through the personal transformation of a critical mass of individuals. As the song says, "We are the world", and if there is to be any lasting change in the world it will only be accomplished through the accumulated efforts of its inhabitants. The transformation through awareness that we will be tracing in this book is, to use the alchemical term, a *transmutation* of ignorance into wisdom. This transmutation involves a change in our individual levels of awareness, much in the manner of the "improvement of the alchemist" mentioned above.

The primary dictum of Alchemy in Latin is: *solve et coagula* which means "separate and join together (literally dissolve and coagulate)". The evolution of wisdom



described in this book, the "alchemical transmutation" of ignorance into wisdom, involves both a separation and a joining together as we will see.

## The Need for The Alchemy of Awareness

“Everyone thinks of changing the world but no one thinks of changing himself.”

*Leo Tolstoy*

Albert Einstein is reported to have observed that we can never solve a problem on the same level of awareness as that at which the problem was created. According to Einstein’s observation, to solve a problem requires us to take a step up to a level of awareness beyond the one at which the problem was created. This seems like good advice but a question immediately arises concerning the nature of the levels of which we speak. What is a level of awareness and what does it look like? And, if we knew a level of awareness when we saw one, how would the movement from one level to another be accomplished? These are just some of the thorny questions we will need to address if we are to establish a strategy for improving our individual and collective awareness levels.

When we attempt to solve any problem we are limited by the extent of our awareness. We cannot entertain solutions of which we are unaware. If, in our search for a solution to a problem, we are somehow able to gain a wider perspective than that which we had when the problem was created we would have options available that were not available to us before. A widening of our field of awareness, a grander perspective, affords us an increase in possibilities from which to select an appropriate solution. This is where *The Alchemy of Awareness* comes in. We will examine what it is exactly that constitutes a level of awareness, familiarize ourselves with six ascending levels of awareness, and look at how the alchemy of awareness that occurs during a transition from one level of awareness to another can result in a broader and wiser perspective.

## Developmental Stages/Levels

Over the years a number of well founded systems have been formulated that identify stages in personal development. The chart below shows how some of the more commonly accepted and well known systems align with one another.

Level / Stage	Maslow Hierarchy of Needs	Kohlberg Moral Stages	Kegan Stages of Self	Levels of Awareness (Findlay)
0			Incorporative	Embedded

Level / Stage	Maslow Hierarchy of Needs	Kohlberg Moral Stages	Kegan Stages of Self	Levels of Awareness (Findlay)
1	Physiological (basic physical needs)	Obedience & Punishment (obedience to authority)	Impulsive	Impulsive Body Self
2	Safety/Security	Individualism & Exchange (scratch each other's backs)	Imperial (needs wishes interests)	Needy Self (desires)
3	Love/Belonging	Interpersonal Relationships	Interpersonal	Member Self (connections)
4	Esteem	Maintaining Social Order*	Institutional	Independent Self
5	Purpose/Meaning	Social Contract & Individual Rights	Inter-individual	Interdependent Self
6	Self Actualization	Universal Principles		Transcendence of Separation

Robert Kegan is the William and Miriam Meehan Professor in Adult Learning and Professional Development at Harvard University. Additionally he is the Educational Chair for the Institute for Management and Leadership in Education and the Co-director for the Change Leadership Group. Kegan is a developmental psychologist and the author of several books on the topic.

Robert Kegan's *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* discusses five stages of development through which an individual's self may evolve as he or she matures. I say "may evolve through" because it is not guaranteed that we will all progress to the final stages. This has great bearing on the subject of this book because it is asserted herein that the level of practical wisdom needed to address our pressing global concerns exceeds that of today's average individual. Robert Kegan maintains, in a book called *In Over Our Heads*, that our current global problems are largely due to the fact that we have not evolved to a high enough order of

consciousness<sup>1</sup> to contend with the complexities of the issues we now face. The purpose of this book is to address this dangerous and challenging state of affairs.

---

<sup>1</sup> In the context of this statement Kegan's orders of consciousness roughly correspond to the levels of awareness presented in this book.

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

