

Brilliance: The Essence of Intelligence

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From the Introduction to the Book

What is intelligence? Is it simply one element in the functioning of the brain? If so, how much of it is determined by heredity and how much by nurturance? If not, is it a quality or mode of consciousness? And if it is an expression of consciousness, what then is its relationship to the physical body, and the brain in particular? And what influences its development? Looking at intelligence as an expression of consciousness, we can see it in two ways depending on the theory—either as an epiphenomenon of brain development or as a phenomenon that emerges only when brain complexity reaches a certain level.

These questions point to how controversial the nature of intelligence is, especially in light of our contemporary scientific theories. And if we are familiar with spiritual teachings, the situation may appear even more complex. In those contexts, spirit or spiritual nature is frequently described as intelligence or the intelligence in all things. Just as we also hear that the universe has intelligence underlying it or governing it.

In this book, it is not our primary interest to address these questions, nor do we intend to challenge the various positions except in limited ways. Clearly there is evidence that intelligence is related to brain functioning, and that it is partly related to hereditary factors and partly to environmental ones. And it is obviously related to the functioning of consciousness.

Our attempt in this book is simply to point out another element related to intelligence, another dimension of it that can be directly experienced and ascertained. In understanding this dimension of intelligence, we will see how it is related to consciousness, without that challenging the evidence that correlates it to brain functioning or heredity and environment. Yet, we will also see how our spiritual nature is the deepest source of intelligence and, therefore, why spirit is frequently referred to as intelligence.

The understanding reflected in this book is a result of a particular spiritual transformation that reveals the ground and nature of consciousness. This ground turns out to be the underlying nature of everything, even the physical universe—and hence the body and its brain. This spiritual ground, what we call Essence—the essence of consciousness and all of reality—reveals itself through many qualities, which are primordially inherent to it.

These qualities may manifest undifferentiated from each other—as the presence of spiritual nature beyond mind and normal experience—or as differentiated and discriminated experiences of ontological presence. In the latter case, spiritual nature manifests its qualities in a differentiated way, which we refer to as essential aspects. These essential aspects are intimately related to our various mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual faculties.

One thing we discover in this revelation of the nature of spirit is that it is characterized not only by qualities such as power, love, truth, and so on, but also by a particular luminosity that appears to our mind to be intelligence. In other words, we realize that we can actually experience intelligence directly—not through an activity, as we normally do, but as a palpable presence, as a presence of pure consciousness characterized by intelligence.

We find out that intelligence is an inherent quality of our spiritual nature, fundamentally inseparable from it. Yet in functional activities, it flows through our consciousness, and through its physiological supports—the brain and the nervous system—to give these functions a kind of efficiency and completeness we usually associate with intelligence.

We discover our spirit as intelligence, intelligence that manifests in what we call intelligent functioning, yet is experienceable directly and apart from its functioning.

We experience ourselves, then, not as having intelligence but present as intelligence. In this experience, we find out what the essence of intelligence is, the source of this capacity. In our study in this book, we not only discuss the characteristics of this essential presence of intelligence, but also how it is determined and influenced by environmental factors. We look at some of these specific factors, our relationship to them, and how that relationship deeply influences our experience and realization of intelligence. And although we do not discuss the influence of heredity or the role of the brain in relation to intelligence, it is part of our understanding that aspects of Essence function through the physical organism, including the brain. Therefore, our realization of the aspect of intelligence will also be influenced by our heredity.

In Part One of *The Essence of Intelligence*, the teaching on the aspect of Brilliancy takes the form of four individual talks. These talks were presented as part of a retreat on this aspect that took place in California. The exercises referred to at the end of the talks were followed up with discussion; however, those questions and comments are not included in this part. The intention in Part One is to provide a concentrated presentation of the phenomenological dimension of the Brilliancy aspect, the essence of intelligence.

In Part Two, a talk from a different retreat is presented on Brilliancy in relation to the practice of inquiry. In Part Three, the reader will have the chance to experience the unfoldment of personal inquiries by students as they explore Brilliancy in relation to their own experience. These inquiries occurred over the course of several meetings in a smaller group retreat in Colorado.

Though clearly not an exhaustive study, we hope *The Essence of Intelligence* will contribute to the understanding of intelligence from the perspective of deep spiritual perception. This book also presents this investigation of intelligence within the specific contexts of the teaching of the Diamond Approach, in order to demonstrate how that particular method appears in actual application. Therefore, this book is both a study of the question of intelligence and its development and liberation, and an illustration—using the aspect of intelligence—of the methodology of the Diamond Approach® in the work of realizing Essence in its various aspects.