

CHOKMAH AS THE ILLUMINATING INTELLIGENCE

Wisdom, the Left Hemisphere, and the Splendour of the First Emanation

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Abstract

The Sefer Yetzirah designates the Second Path — the path corresponding to the Sephira Chokmah — as the Illuminating Intelligence, declaring that it is the Crown of Creation, the Splendour of the Unity, equalling it, exalted above every head, and named by the Kabbalists the Second Glory. This designation describes the first emanation from the undifferentiated source — the first flash of directed, illuminating intelligence that proceeds from the Crown. This paper argues that the Illuminating Intelligence corresponds with structural precision to the left cerebral hemisphere in its character as the Logos — the analytical, sequential, expressive, directed intelligence that articulates the undifferentiated into the determinate. Chokmah is the Illuminating Intelligence because the left hemisphere illuminates: it casts the directed beam of focused, analytical attention that picks out, articulates, and makes determinate. It is the Splendour of the Unity, equalling it, because the first emanation still bears the full radiance of the source while being the first directed expression of it. The left hemisphere, the Logos, the Father in the supernal triad, is the directing Wisdom — the first illuminating flash that proceeds from the Crown and casts the directed light by which the undifferentiated becomes the articulate. Chokmah is the source from which the analytical-expressive intelligence descends through the left pillar to Geburah and Hod.

Keywords: Chokmah · Sefer Yetzirah · Illuminating Intelligence · Wisdom · Left Hemisphere · Logos · The Father · Directed Attention · Analytical Mode · Chiah · Abba · Neurological Qabalah · McGilchrist · Catharturgy

I. The Second Path: The Sefer Yetzirah's Declaration

I.1 The Text and the First Emanation

The Sefer Yetzirah declares of the Second Path, in the Westcott translation: “The Second Path is that of the Illuminating Intelligence: it is the Crown of Creation, the Splendour of the Unity, equalling it, and it is exalted above every head, and named by the Kabbalists the Second Glory.”

Chokmah is the second of the Sephiroth and the first emanation from Kether, the undifferentiated Crown. As the Illuminating Intelligence, it is the first directed expression of the source — the first flash of focused, articulating intelligence that proceeds from the unity and begins the work of creation. It is the Crown of Creation because it is the first created emanation, the highest expression below the absolute source. It is the Splendour of the Unity, equalling it, because the first emanation still bears the full radiance of Kether while being the first directed expression of it. It is the Second Glory because it is the second after the Primal Glory of Kether.

The neurological account renders this precise. Chokmah is the left cerebral hemisphere in its character as the Logos — the analytical, sequential, expressive, directed intelligence. The left hemisphere illuminates in the precise sense that McGilchrist identifies: it casts the directed, focused beam of attention that picks out, isolates, articulates, and makes determinate. Where Kether (the Crown) is the undifferentiated ground of awareness as such, Chokmah is the first directed expression of that awareness — the illuminating flash that begins to articulate the undifferentiated into the determinate. The Illuminating Intelligence is the directed analytical light of the Logos hemisphere.

I.2 Illumination as Directed, Focused Attention

To illuminate is to cast a directed light — to pick out, focus upon, and make visible a determinate object against the undifferentiated ground. This is the precise character of the left hemisphere's mode of attention, as McGilchrist's work establishes: the left hemisphere casts a narrow, focused, instrumental beam of attention that isolates and grasps the determinate object, abstracting it from the living context. The Illuminating Intelligence is this directed beam — the focused, analytical, articulating attention that picks out the determinate from the undifferentiated whole.

The illumination of Chokmah is thus the first act of articulation — the first casting of the directed light by which the undifferentiated unity begins to be divided into determinate forms. This is the Logos function in its supernal expression: the Word that articulates, the directed wisdom that picks out and names, the first illuminating expression that begins to give the undifferentiated source its determinate created form. Chokmah illuminates because the left hemisphere's directed attention is the light by which the determinate is picked out from the whole.

I.3 The Splendour of the Unity, Equalling It

The phrase that Chokmah is the Splendour of the Unity, equalling it, captures the paradoxical proximity of the first emanation to its source. Chokmah is the first expression of Kether, yet it still equals the unity — it bears the full radiance of the source while being its first directed expression. This is the supernal proximity: Chokmah and Kether are above the Abyss, in the supernal triad, where the distinction between source and expression has not yet hardened into the separation that characterises the lower Sephiroth. The first emanation still participates in the fullness of the source.

Neurologically, this proximity is the relationship between the hemisphere's directed attention (Chokmah) and the undifferentiated awareness that is its ground (Kether). The directed beam of attention is the first articulation of awareness, yet it is not separate from awareness — it is awareness directed, awareness focused, awareness casting its light. The Splendour of the Unity equalling it is the directed attention that remains continuous with the awareness from which it proceeds. Chokmah is not separate from Kether but is Kether directed — the undifferentiated awareness casting its first focused beam. The Illuminating Intelligence equals the unity because it is the unity's first directed expression, not yet separated from its source.

The Illuminating Intelligence is the first directed expression of the undifferentiated source — the left hemisphere's focused, analytical beam of attention that picks out the determinate from the whole. It is the Splendour of the Unity, equalling it, because the directed attention is awareness focused, not yet separated from the undifferentiated ground from which it proceeds. Chokmah is the illuminating flash of the Logos, the directed light by which the determinate is articulated.

II. Chokmah in the Tradition: Wisdom, the Father, and the Primordial Point

II.1 Chokmah as Wisdom and the Supernal Father

Chokmah means Wisdom — the directed, expressive, generative wisdom that is the first principle of creation. In the Lurianic tradition, Chokmah is Abba, the supernal Father, the masculine generative principle that pairs with Binah, the supernal Mother (Aima). The Father is the directing, generative, expressive principle — the active wisdom that initiates, directs, and articulates, complementing the Mother's receptive, containing, contextual understanding. Chokmah is the generative Wisdom, the directed expressive principle, the supernal Father whose directed light initiates the creative articulation.

The Father's generative directing is the left hemisphere's expressive, articulating mode. Where the Mother (Binah, the right hemisphere) receives and contains the broad context, the Father (Chokmah, the left hemisphere) directs and expresses the focused articulation. The masculine generative principle of the tradition is the Logos hemisphere's directed, expressive, articulating function: the wisdom that initiates and directs, that casts the focused beam, that articulates the determinate. Chokmah is the supernal Father because the left hemisphere's directed expressive mode is the generative, initiating, articulating principle of the soul's creative life.

II.2 The Primordial Point and the First Articulation

Chokmah is traditionally symbolised as the primordial point — the first dimensionless point of directed expression that emerges from the undifferentiated Crown, the seed-point from which all the subsequent emanation unfolds. The point is the first articulation: the first determinate expression that picks itself out from the undifferentiated ground, the seed from which the structured Tree grows. The primordial point is the first focused beam, the first determinate

articulation, the seed of all subsequent form.

Neurologically, the primordial point is the first focused act of directed attention — the first picking-out of a determinate object from the undifferentiated field of awareness. The left hemisphere's directed beam is dimensionless in the sense that it is pure direction, pure focus, the act of articulation itself before any particular content. The primordial point is the directed attention's first act: the casting of the focused beam that begins the articulation of the determinate from the whole. From this first point — this first directed articulation — the entire structured architecture of the analytical mind unfolds.

III. The Left Hemisphere as Chokmah: The Neurological Case

III.1 The Logos Hemisphere and the Directed Beam of Attention

The neurological identification of Chokmah is the left cerebral hemisphere in its character as the Logos — the analytical, sequential, expressive, directed intelligence. McGilchrist's extensive work establishes the left hemisphere's characteristic mode: a narrow, focused, instrumental beam of attention that isolates and grasps the determinate object; a sequential, analytical processing that breaks the whole into parts; an expressive, articulating function that names and categorises; a tendency toward the abstract, the fixed, the determinate. This is the Illuminating Intelligence: the directed light of focused analytical attention.

The left hemisphere is the source of the analytical-expressive mode that descends through the left pillar of the Tree. Chokmah (the left hemisphere as a whole) is the supernal root; Geburah (the left DLPFC) is its executive expression; Hod (the left posterior cortex) is its perceptual-verbal expression. The directed, analytical, articulating intelligence originates in the left hemisphere's characteristic mode and expresses itself at the executive level (Geburah's radical analytical precision) and the perceptual level (Hod's verbal-analytical articulation). Chokmah is the supernal source of the entire left-pillar analytical architecture.

III.2 The Articulation of the Determinate

The left hemisphere's specific contribution to consciousness is the articulation of the determinate — the picking-out, naming, categorising, and fixing of determinate objects against the undifferentiated ground. Where the right hemisphere (Binah) receives the broad living context, the left hemisphere (Chokmah) articulates the determinate forms within it. This articulating function is the illumination: the casting of the directed light by which the determinate is picked out, named, and made available to analytical grasp.

This is the Logos function in the precise theological sense. The Logos is the Word — the principle of articulation, the directed expression by which the determinate is spoken into form. In the Christian Qabalah, Chokmah is associated with the Logos, the Word through whom all things

were made (John 1:3). The left hemisphere's articulating function is the neurological expression of the Logos principle: the directed wisdom that articulates the determinate, the Word that picks out and names, the illuminating intelligence that casts the light by which the undifferentiated is spoken into determinate form. Chokmah illuminates because the Logos articulates.

III.3 The Necessary Relationship to Binah

Chokmah's directed illumination operates in necessary relationship to Binah's receptive understanding. The first emanation from Chokmah flows to Binah — the directed expressive wisdom flows to the receptive containing understanding, where it is given form. The supernal Father and Mother are paired: the directed articulation (Chokmah) and the receptive containing (Binah) together constitute the supernal generative relationship from which the lower Sephiroth emanate. The left hemisphere's directed articulation and the right hemisphere's receptive containing are the two complementary modes that together constitute the complete supernal intelligence.

This is McGilchrist's central thesis at the supernal level. The two hemispheres are not redundant but complementary: the left hemisphere's focused articulation requires the right hemisphere's broad contextual reception to know what to articulate and toward what end; the right hemisphere's broad reception requires the left hemisphere's focused articulation to render the received context determinate and communicable. The Master (Binah, the right hemisphere) and the Emissary (Chokmah, the left hemisphere) are paired in necessary relationship. Chokmah illuminates the determinate that Binah receives in context; the directed light and the broad reception together constitute the complete supernal intelligence.

The left hemisphere is the Illuminating Intelligence: the directed, focused, analytical beam of attention that picks out and articulates the determinate from the undifferentiated whole, the Logos that speaks the determinate into form. It is the supernal source of the left-pillar analytical architecture, descending to Geburah's executive precision and Hod's verbal articulation. The directed light of Chokmah operates in necessary relationship to the broad reception of Binah — the Father and the Mother, the Emissary and the Master, paired in the supernal generative relationship.

IV. The Chiah: Chokmah's Soul-Level Correspondence

IV.1 The Chiah as the Directed Life-Force and Will

The Qabalistic tradition assigns to Chokmah the Chiah — the life-force, the vital directed will, the dynamic creative energy of the soul in its pure directed mode. The Chiah is the soul's generative will-force: the directed vital energy that initiates, drives, and articulates. It is the higher will in its purest form — not yet the expansive giving of Chesed or the restraining discipline of Geburah, but the pure directed will-force itself, the generative energy that initiates the soul's creative

expression.

The Chiah's directed will-force is the soul-level expression of the left hemisphere's directed, initiating, expressive mode. The pure directed will — the generative energy that initiates and articulates — is the soul's Chokmah function: the directed wisdom that casts the focused beam, that initiates the creative articulation, that drives the soul's expressive engagement with the world. The Chiah is the directed life-force, the generative will, the soul's purest directed expressive energy. It is the will that descends through the Abyss-crossing paths to become the executive will at Geburah and Chesed.

IV.2 The Will Path and the Descent into Executive Expression

From Chokmah descends the Will path (E, Chokmah→Geburah) — the Abyss-crossing path through which the Logos intelligence becomes the analytical executive. As established in the corrected account, this is not a neurological tract but the functional expression of the left hemisphere's analytical intelligence at the executive level. The Will path is Chokmah's directed wisdom becoming Geburah's radical analytical precision: the supernal Logos expressing itself as the executive's reduction to the root. The Chiah's directed will-force, descending through the Will path, becomes the disciplined analytical will of Geburah.

This descent is the soul's movement from supernal directed wisdom to operational analytical precision. Chokmah's pure directed will (the Chiah) descends through the Will path to become Geburah's precise analytical executive determination. The illuminating intelligence of the supernal Father becomes the radical analytical precision of the executive. The directed light of Chokmah, descending the left pillar, becomes the focused analytical determination of Geburah and the verbal-analytical articulation of Hod. The supernal Wisdom illuminates; the executive precision determines; the verbal cortex articulates — the single analytical mode of the Logos hemisphere expressed at three descending levels.

V. The Right Side of the Head: Somatic Access to Chokmah

V.1 The Supernal Position and the Left Hemisphere's Anchor

The Neurological Qabalah identifies Chokmah's somatic anchor at the right side of the head/face — the left hemisphere governs the right side of the body and face through the crossed pathways, and the supernal Father sits at the right of the supernal triad when the Tree is viewed. In the inner-ear correspondence developed in the Binah paper, the directed expressive intelligence of Chokmah corresponds to the active, expressive, articulating dimension, complementary to Binah's receptive inner-ear reception.

The contemplative access to Chokmah is the cultivation of pure directed attention — the focused, articulating beam of attention in its purest form, prior to its executive or perceptual expression.

This is the directed will-force itself: the capacity to cast the focused beam, to direct the attention, to initiate the articulating engagement. To cultivate Chokmah is to develop the pure directed attention that is the source of the entire analytical-expressive architecture — the illuminating intelligence that picks out and articulates the determinate.

V.2 Practising Chokmah: The Directed Beam and Its Supernal Source

The practical work at Chokmah is the cultivation of pure directed attention in conscious relationship to its undifferentiated source in Kether. The directed beam of attention proceeds from the undifferentiated ground of awareness; to cultivate Chokmah is to develop the directed attention while maintaining its continuity with the awareness from which it proceeds. This is the supernal practice: the directed light held in conscious relationship to the undifferentiated ground, the Splendour of the Unity that equals the unity, the focused beam that does not lose its continuity with the awareness that casts it.

For the broader contemplative architecture, Chokmah's directed attention is the source of the focused analytical engagement that the lower analytical Sephiroth express. The cultivation of healthy directed attention — the capacity to focus, to articulate, to pick out the determinate — in balance with Binah's broad receptive reception is the supernal foundation of the balanced intelligence. The directed light (Chokmah) and the broad reception (Binah) together, held in their proper supernal relationship, constitute the complete intelligence from which the balanced operational architecture descends. To cultivate Chokmah is to develop the directed beam in balance with the broad reception, the Father in relationship to the Mother.

To cultivate Chokmah is to develop pure directed attention — the focused, articulating beam in its purest form, held in conscious relationship to its undifferentiated source in the Crown. The directed light of the Logos, balanced by the broad reception of the Mother, is the supernal foundation of the complete intelligence. The illuminating beam proceeds from the undifferentiated ground and does not lose its continuity with it.

VI. The Privation of Chokmah: The Severed Beam and the Tyranny of the Determinate

VI.1 The Qliphoth of Chokmah: Ghagiel and the Hinderers

The Qliphoth of Chokmah is Ghagiel — the Hinderers, in this register the distorted form of the illuminating intelligence in which the directed articulation has severed itself from its source and from the broad reception that should balance it. Where Chokmah's Illuminating Intelligence casts the directed light in continuity with the undifferentiated ground and in relationship to Binah's broad reception, the Qliphothic form is the directed beam severed from both: the analytical articulation that has lost its continuity with the living whole, the directed light that picks out the

determinate but no longer in service of the contextual understanding.

This is McGilchrist's account of the left hemisphere's usurpation — the Emissary mistaking itself for the Master. When the directed analytical articulation severs itself from the broad contextual reception that should govern it, the result is the tyranny of the determinate: the world reduced to the analysable parts, the living context lost to the abstract categories, the directed beam mistaking its own narrow illumination for the whole. Ghagiel is the illuminating intelligence severed from its source and its complement — the directed light that has forgotten it is the Emissary, not the Master, and has mistaken its own focused articulation for the whole of reality.

VI.2 The Clinical Dimension: Restoring the Beam to Its Source

The restoration of Chokmah's healthy function is the restoration of the directed beam to its continuity with the undifferentiated source (Kether) and its relationship to the broad reception (Binah). The directed articulation is not to be suppressed — it is a necessary and generative function — but it must be restored to its proper relationship: the Emissary serving the Master, the directed light in continuity with the awareness that casts it and in service of the broad context it articulates. The restoration is the re-establishment of the supernal balance: the directed wisdom (Chokmah) in proper relationship to the receptive understanding (Binah), both proceeding from and continuous with the undifferentiated source (Kether).

The clinical relevance is the rebalancing of the over-dominant analytical mode. In the conditions where the directed analytical articulation has become severed and over-dominant — the rumination that analyses without resolving, the abstraction that loses the living context, the determinate fixity that cannot hold the broad whole — the restoration is the re-establishment of the directed beam's relationship to the broad reception. The directed light, restored to its continuity with the source and its relationship to the broad context, illuminates in proper service rather than tyrannising in severed dominance. Restore the beam to its source and the illumination serves the whole.

The severed beam is the directed articulation cut off from its source and its complement — the Emissary mistaking itself for the Master, the analytical light tyrannising over the living whole. The restoration is the return of the directed beam to its continuity with the undifferentiated source and its relationship to the broad reception. The illumination serves the whole when the directed light remains continuous with the awareness that casts it and in relationship to the understanding that contextualises it.

VII. Conclusion: Chokmah and the Illuminating Beam

The Sefer Yetzirah's designation of Chokmah as the Illuminating Intelligence is the structural identification of the left hemisphere's directed, analytical, expressive mode as the first emanation from the undifferentiated source. The Illuminating Intelligence casts the directed light — the left hemisphere's focused beam of attention that picks out and articulates the determinate from the

undifferentiated whole. It is the Crown of Creation and the Second Glory because it is the first directed expression of the source. It is the Splendour of the Unity, equalling it, because the directed attention is awareness focused, not yet separated from the ground from which it proceeds.

The convergence across four registers is exact. The Sefer Yetzirah says: the illuminating first emanation, the Splendour of the Unity equalling it. The neuroscience says: the left hemisphere casts the directed, focused, analytical beam of attention that articulates the determinate, the Logos mode that picks out and names. The tradition says: Chokmah is Wisdom, the supernal Father, the primordial point, the generative directing principle. The Christian Qabalah says: Chokmah is the Logos, the Word through whom all things are articulated into form. All four describe the same directed, illuminating, articulating intelligence — the first focused expression of the undifferentiated source.

The practical consequence is the cultivation of directed attention in balance with broad reception, held in continuity with the undifferentiated source. Chokmah illuminates; Binah receives; Kether is the ground from which both proceed. The directed beam of the Logos, balanced by the broad reception of the Mother and continuous with the undifferentiated awareness of the Crown, is the supernal foundation of the complete intelligence. The illuminating intelligence is the directed light that articulates the determinate — and its health is its continuity with its source and its service to the broad whole it illuminates.

The Second Path is the Illuminating Intelligence because the left hemisphere casts the directed beam of focused, analytical attention that picks out and articulates the determinate from the undifferentiated whole. It is the Splendour of the Unity, equalling it, because the directed light is awareness focused, the first expression of the source, not yet separated from the ground from which it proceeds. Chokmah is the illuminating flash of the Logos, the directed wisdom that speaks the determinate into form — and its health is the directed beam held in continuity with its source and in service of the broad whole. The Father directs; the Mother receives; the Crown is the ground of both.

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