

Johfra and the Signs of the Zodiac Capricorn and Aquarius

CAPRICORN

CAPRICORN, THE MOUNTAIN GOAT or ibex, is a negative sign, the third earth sign, so earth in resolution. This is the sign at the beginning of winter when the sun is at its lowest; the arc of the sun is at its shallowest and the darkness outside and rest and hibernation in nature are at their peak, and the embryo is laid for the new coming light that begins to grow from this moment on. Saturn is the ruler. It is this natural event that I have taken as my leitmotif in conceiving this painting.

The background of the picture forms a great skull (1), the symbol of death, through which the sun rises (2). The sun's rays push the darker firmament aside (3) to cast a golden gleam over the rocky landscape. This return of the light brings new life with it, illustrated by the small children breaking loose from the Saturnian rocks (4), and, similarly, by Apollo the sun god who wrenches himself away from the dark clutches, crushing the snake Apep, Egyptian symbol of darkness, under his foot (5). The sun hero Hercules also pins a crocodile down under his foot—an Egyptian symbol analogous to Apep—while he squeezes a snake to death in his other hand (6). In Greek mythology, Hercules carried out his first heroic deed by killing two snakes that fell on him while still only in his cradle.

Besides this macrocosmic symbolism relating to the return of the sun, there is also a microcosmic



meaning to the sign, a statement for the self-evolving human being born under it: that he should realize his potential. As archer in the former sign, he aimed his arrows of thought at a raised target. Now he should realize these ideals in steady, hard work. The goat climbs higher and higher up the mountain and does not rest before reaching the lonely peak. There is, however, a firm law of nature that every action summons up a counter-action. So here, too, the Capricorn native meets his Saturn, his opponent.

It is a generally held misconception that Saturn is a maleficent and cursed planet. In fact, it only brings misfortune in the materialist sense. Spiritually, the opposite is true. Saturn, the crystallizing principle, or Chronos, time, provides opposition through which each work is judged and

This is the second of six articles comprising both text and paintings by the artist Johfra. Rays reprint permissions have been graciously granted by Johfra's wife, Ellen Lorien.





eventually finds its correct form. Saturn, who brings us the obstacles and problems, is the great teacher and initiator. No work can be called complete that has not been expressed in firm matter and has not withstood the test of time.

Initiation takes place in the cave, in the deepest depths of the kingdom of Saturn. All sun gods and heroes were born, hidden or brought up in a rocky cavern at a time when the light was at its weakest—Mithra, for example, Hermes, Zeus, Apollo, Dionysus and even Christ who came to earth in a rocky stable. That is why I have painted Saturn as Father Time, in front of a cave, a gateway.

Now come the magical seals of the planet Saturn and its hierarchy of angels and spirits: left, the planetary seal is engraved in a stone next to the small Hercules (7). To the left of the cave is a triangular stone because three is the number of Saturn. This is particularly associated with Binah in the Cabalistic tree of life. Binah is the third sephira at the top of the left pillar of severity. The astrological symbol of Capricorn is engraved in this stone (8). Just above that is the sign of the planetary spirit Zazel (9). Above the cave the threefold signature of the archangel Cassiel (10). Right under the goat's hooves is the astrological signature of the planet Saturn (11). To the right of the entrance to the cave, engraved in the stone, is the sign of the planetary intelligence Agiel (12). In the bottom right-hand corner, on a stone, is the seal of the planetary spirit Arathron (13).

AQUARIUS

AQUARIUS, THE WATER CARRIER, is a positive sign, the last of the air triangle, so air in resolution. The sun is in Aquarius at the end of January when the deepest darkness gives way increasingly to light. Aquarius's ruling planet used to be Saturn but since the discovery of Uranus in 1781, this planet was attributed to Aquarius because many facets of the sign were not satisfactorily explained by the influence of Saturn.

As far as man's path of development through the zodiac is concerned, this eleventh sign is characterized by transcendence and fluidity of movement across all borders. Having climbed the mountain in his Capricorn phase to renew himself, man pours

the living waters of his new insight from the height of his acquired consciousness over those who are still in the valley below. He is the humanist who will not rest before he has imparted his new knowledge to others.

The border between the self and the non-self is not respected here. Far from it. The Aquarian lives in total awareness of the unity and kinship of his fellow men. The consciousness of self in this phase does exist but it is pushed to the background, and, as this is done, the borders are broken down. This blurring of borders, especially in the macrocosmic sense, between power and matter, spirit and body, is the basic characteristic of our present day. In astrological circles this is attributed to the new spirit that under the influence of Aquarius is poured out over the world and to which everyone must react. This thought has been my leitmotif in the painting of the sign. I wish briefly to examine the Aquarian influence.

The moment in spring when the days are the same length as the nights, the spring equinox, does not always fall under the same sign of the zodiac; it changes because the sloping axis of the earth makes a slowly spinning movement—it moves back over thirty degrees in 2,156 years. Shortly before the universal adoption of the Roman calendar, the spring equinox left Aries and entered the sign of Pisces; it will soon be entering Aquarius.

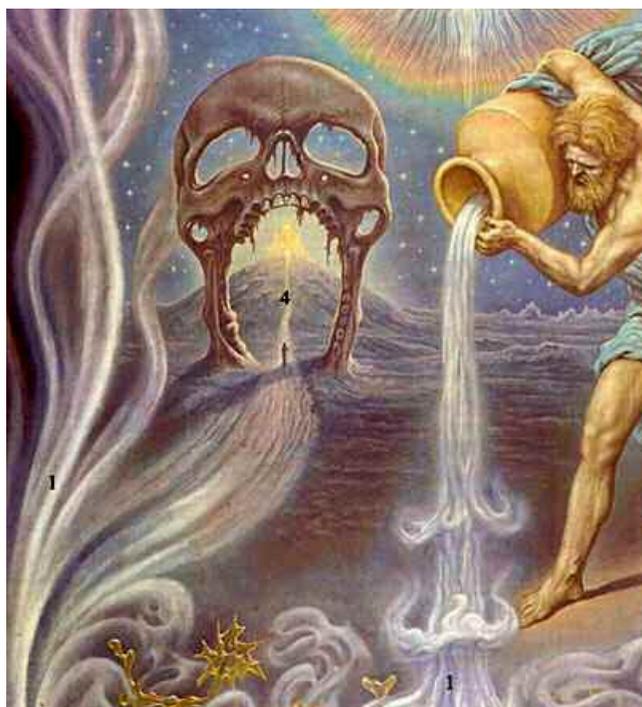
Tradition has it that when this equinox enters another sign, a new spirit will be awakened in the people. When it entered the sign of Pisces, the Christian religion came into being. The symbolism of the fish is very obvious here: most of the first disciples were fishermen, and they later became fishers of men. The multiplicity of bread and fish speaks for itself too, just as the bishop's miter which takes the form of a fish's head. In the oldest paintings and in the catacombs, the fish is often used as a symbol for Christ.

They say that every age (cosmic century) possesses its own particular spirit. The Pisces age was ruled by devotion and a readiness to sacrifice. Belief, hope and love were the virtues of the time, as were modesty and a gentle courage. These were the ideals, however much they may or may not have been realized. The Piscean age also saw the

contradictory depths of intolerance and materialism. Knowledge and philosophy became more and more materialistic in slant. Towards the end of the age came wars and mass murders whose extent and horror the world had not previously known. Although we are not yet out of this stage, there has been a visible change since the French Revolution; the beginning of a new spiritual condition, particularly among the modern younger generation. This is where the glimmerings of a new age can be seen.

Although the equinox has not yet entered the sign of Aquarius, the influences of the old and the new are clearly overlapping. Next to or under the established order that is obviously approaching its end and is draining itself in a large-scale cultural and economic debacle, a lot is going on that points in a completely different direction.

Since the discovery of radium and the subsequent discovery that atoms can, after all, be split, our materialistic image of the world is quickly breaking down. Knowledge is transcending itself. Parapsychology, which has broken through our image and space, is an example of this. Where one used to see man in totally mechanical terms, one thinks now more and more in terms of fields of power. Given the splitting of the atom, matter appears to be an aspect of energy and vice versa. The occult, too, magic and astrology, are no longer so lightly dismissed as superstition, but are cautious-



ly being examined by forward-looking scientists.

On the social level, human rights and equality without regard to race and religion are now generally accepted norms, the result of the influence coming from Aquarius whose general characteristics are insight, equality, freedom from dogma, freedom of speech and, especially, kindred with all people. Differences and borders are blurred. Aquarius brings unity. That man has literally conquered the black power and left the earth to travel in space and because of that has begun to think in

cosmic terms, is more than just symbolical. I have built all these characteristics into the picture in vague, fluid forms which are borrowed from the spiralling air streams visibly formed in aerodynamic wind tunnels (1). These movements represent the electro-magnetic waves of the new age that are poured out by the water carrier over the earth; everything is transcended through them. The all-ruling Uranus radiates out over the world like a spiritual sun (2).

Seven lotus flowers drink up this new current of power. They are the seven chakras. According to Tantric Hindu doctrine, seven psychic organs reside in the astral body of man and are linked to our central nervous system. As 'wheels' of psychic energy, they suck in the life power, the Prana, taking care of our vitality in the process. Spiritual influences are taken in with the Prana, and these then determine our spiritual state. In this painting the flowers also form a Menorah, the holy seven-branched candlestick of the Jews representing the seven lights before God's throne (3).

In the background the former ruler of Aquarius is worked into the skull motif. It is the gateway of initiation, the gateway of Saturn. In the distance, the pilgrim passes through the gateway on his path of life to Mount Salvat where the raised castle of the Grail





beckons him from the Universal Consciousness (4).

Because Uranus was only discovered when the mediaeval system of magical correspondences had already been developed for some time, this planet

has never been associated with the hierarchy of angels and intelligences. For the same reason, there are no references to the Cabalistic tree of life. That is why I have only depicted the astrological signature of the new ruler Uranus (top left) (5) and the old ruler Saturn (top right) (6). Beneath the middle lotus flower the symbol of Aquarius is formed in the waves of power (7).

The lines of the frame are borrowed from the flowing movements characteristic of Art Nouveau. This period in art was, in my opinion, the first clearly to show the Aquarian influence. (Continued) □

GOD

Some only see God in the Bible,
Writ by inspired men
Whose hands made it the record
As Omnipotence guided the pen.

I have heard God speak on the seashore
In the wave as it crashed on the sand
And my weak heart has answered in tremors
Kneeling low at the awful command.

Far up on the mountain I've clambered
O'er the rocks to the height sublime,
And there has my soul in the silence
Conversed with the Author of Time.

I 'have felt there the press of His finger
Touching the strings of my soul,
Till the senses were lost in the music
And became a part of the whole.

I have seen His smile in the moonbeam,
In the calm of the peaceful lake;
I have seen His frown in the tempest,
In the roar, in the crash, in the shake.

I have seen the reflex of His visage
(No one sees His face and records)
In the vivid bolt of the lightning
As it wrote on the clouds mystic words....

I feel His presence o'er me
As I stand in the midnight hour
And note the planets above me,
The gems of His crown of power.

I breathe His breath in the red rose,
Inhale God in the perfume,
And mark His finger of beauty
In her delicate, lovely bloom....

I see in the works of His creatures,
In the fruit of man's toil and thought,
A wisdom, a knowledge, transcendent
Which only God's mind could have wrought;

The dream of the painter and sculptor,
Who create from their brain Beauty's sheen;
The song of the poet who loves her
Though she be seen or unseen;

The touch of the lordly musician
Blending his soul in the keys
Till the organ cries out and echoes
Heavenly harmonies—

All show the Master mind working
Its pleasure the creature upon;
In Nature and Art I can see that
God and all Beauty are one.

In Niagara's thundering torrent,
In the lark's glad uplifting song,
In the heavenly smile of an infant,
In the battle of Right over Wrong,

Is God revealed to his creatures.
No need for prophet or seer
To prove Divinity near us—
All his works cry out "He is here."

—Samuel Watson Wheeler