

Johfra and the Signs of the Zodiac

Taurus and Gemini

TAURUS

TAURUS, THE BULL, is an earth sign. The sun is in Taurus from 20 April to 21 May. Venus is its ruling planet. It is a negative sign, earth in generation. When the sun stands in this house, new life emerges.

I depicted the action, élan, and unchecked movement of the positive first sign Aries; following on from that, I now show the passivity and suscepti-



bility typical of Taurus, the next sign. Under Taurus, substance is moulded into matter, the basis of life. I have particularly tried to stress the fertile, luxuriant nature of the sign.

Under Taurus all is harmony and peace, due to the ruling planet Venus. By falling asleep, Mars has surrendered (1). I have provided Taurus with two symbolical representations: one is the Egyptian Apis,

This is the fourth in a series of articles on the twelve signs of the zodiac as conceived and painted by the Dutch artist Johfra, coupled with his personal commentary. Johfra, recently deceased, studied the Rosicrucian teachings. Thanks to this association, his wife, Ellen Lorien, has graciously granted the Rays permission to reprint his artwork and text.

and the other is Jupiter in the bull form he assumed to carry off Europa. Here Europa is another representation of Venus. She has a rich girdle around her waist (2) and holds up a burning lamp (3); these are the 'magic weapons' assigned to her in the Cabbala. She is draped in a transparent green veil to suggest the plant kingdom. I chose the bull Jupiter because the planet Jupiter also rules growth in the plant world.



Venus wears a garland of seven red roses (4). The rose is Venus's flower, and there are seven because that is the number of Venus (Netsah) in her position as seventh sephira on the cabbalistic tree of life. This is also why the sign of Taurus (middle bottom) is shown as a seven-pointed star (5), forming the heart of a heraldic rose. The planet Venus, the morning star, shines over the goddess's head (6).

Amor, or Eros, child to Venus and Mars, flies through the air leading two white doves, the birds consecrated to Venus (7). This







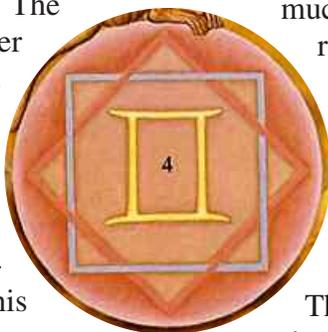
child is the ruler of love, being the result of a harmonious interplay between oppositely placed poles.

The second Tarot card is in the background: the high priestess Isis, who belongs to the sign of Taurus (8). Because of her death and rebirth, she represents the veiled mystery of nature. She bears a triple crown showing the moon in her waxing, full and waning phases, growth being influenced by the moon. This also explains the crescent moon at her feet. She sits in an alcove throne; the tympanum rests on the two cabbalistic pillars: the red marble positive pillar of force or strength Jachin on the right, and the black marble negative pillar of form Boaz on the left. The tympanum balances and connects the two principles.

There is a symmetrical cross on the high priestess' breast which represents the four elements that are the basis of material revelation. The scroll on her lap, partly hidden by her clothes, is the Torah, the law, which at this stage of development cannot yet be completely penetrated.

Those born under the sign of Taurus have a special love for all earthly things. They also have a sense for harmony and beauty in nature and art. This was the guiding principle behind the decoration of the frame which is composed of sumptuous rococo cartouches made of copper, the metal of Venus. Into this frame I worked the following magical signatures of various aspects of Venus. Starting from the left-hand side, from top to bottom, they are: the planetary seal (9); under that the seal of the planetary intelligence Hagiel (10). Then comes the seal of the planetary spirit Kedemel (11) and under that the astrological signature of Venus (12).

In the top right-hand corner is the seal of the Olympic planetary spirit Hagith (13). Under that the godly letters of Venus (14), and then the seal of the order of angels belonging to this planet, the Principalities (15), and next below that the signature of Asmodel, the angel of Venus and inhabitant of the house of Taurus (16); then another signature of Asmodel (17), this time as angel ruling over the month of May, in the same cartouche as the bottom-most signature of Anael, another ruler of May (18).



GEMINI

GEMINI, THE TWINS, is a positive sign, air in generation. The sun stands in Gemini at the end of May, the bloom month when new life, created in March, blossoms out. Mercury is the ruling planet.

Continuing on from the idea that Aries brings the initial power that is then given form in Taurus, I have placed the accent in the third sign on its dualism. The problem of this dualism I have taken as the main motif in my depiction of the sign. Gemini is ruled by the growing consciousness of the relationship between the self and the non-self and the interplay of opposing poles in the cosmos. The problem is how to achieve union through interchange.

Hence the symmetrical construction of the painting. All positive elements—on every level, as much macro as micro-cosmic—are on the right, and all the negative on the left. The dualism between the poles resolves itself in a bridge leading to one union. The colours were also chosen with this in mind. Red is positive, blue negative and the union between them a golden yellow (the colour of higher insight). The background is purple, a mixture of the red and the blue. The golden clouds show the element of air under which this sign falls.

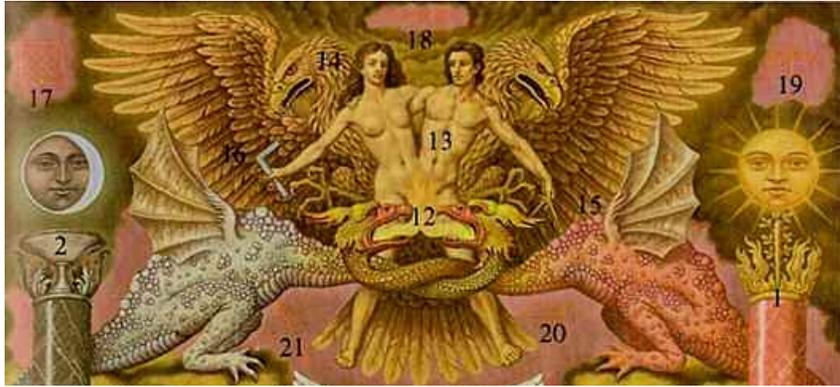
The two pillars from Solomon's temple also appear in this painting. The red pillar Jachin is crowned by a budding staff, symbolizing fire; the first suit of the Tarot pack is also staffs (1). The sun, bringer of strength and life, radiates out above it.

The left-hand, feminine, pillar Boaz, bears a silver goblet in which to receive the powers of the sun (goblets, or cups, are the symbol for water in Tarot) (2). The moon shines above it, reflecting the power of the sun. At the microcosmic level, these opposing principles are embodied in the perfect man and the perfect woman. He points to the heavens and she to the earth, so uniting their human natures ('as above, so below').

With their other hands they hold the staff of Mercury, the caduceus. This emblem of the ruling planet has pride of place because of the importance of Mercury to this sign. The symbolic form of the staff encompasses the same basic idea. The polar

powers are represented by the two snakes which find harmonious resolution in the golden central staff. The staff is crowned by a winged mirror

He sits on the sign of Gemini which is contained in a figure consisting of a positive (red) and negative (blue) square which together form an octagon: in the cabbalistic tree of life, Mercury is assigned to Hod, the eighth Sefhira, so his number is eight (4).



because Mercury, or Hermes, rules over this intellectual faculty which is 'like a mirror that reflects all things while itself remaining clear and motionless' (3). That is why our Mercury principle has, through our intellectual faculty, evolved to wisdom so that all opposites can harmoniously be united. Quick as thought, Hermes is the winged messenger, the mediator. He is also the Psychopompus, the Guide to Souls who accompanies the dead to the other side.

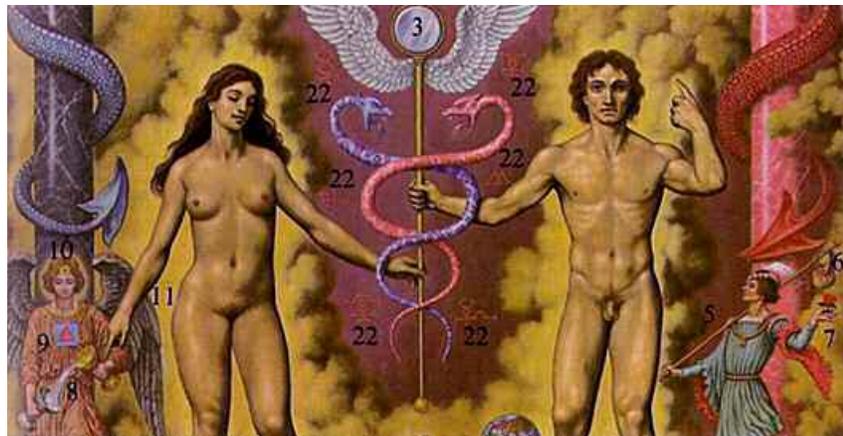
Two Tarot cards are seen, one for each pillar, that are usually associated with the sign of Gemini. On the right is the Fool, the nil card of the greater arcana. A young soul joyfully and unsuspectingly sets out along his path of life through the incarnation. The travelling staff is his will. (5)

The knapsack hanging from it (6) is to contain the experiences he collects in life. He is richly clothed and full of good cheer. The rose in his hand (7) represents his eternal spark of divine inspiration. He stands for the first task, and now will have to choose with care in his confrontation with dualism.

Temperance is at the foot of the left pillar. She is the mature soul who has learned the lessons of this sign and she pours a suitable proportion of the strength or power of the sun into the moon goblet (8). There is an emblem on her breast, a red trian-

A lion and unicorn lie in the foreground, another illustration of the opposing principles. The lion embodies godly love as descending power, while the unicorn suggests the pure virginity of the receiving primordial substance. In ancient India the sign of Gemini was often presented as a lion and unicorn guarding the gate to the Holy City where the 'King of Power and Beauty' resides.

Between them, a dog-faced baboon, the cynocephalus, sits on a circle that suggests union. The baboon is used here as double symbol. In Egypt, it was the personification of Thoth, the god of wisdom and knowledge, the equivalent of the Greek Hermes and Roman Mercury. He is also represented here as the lower analytic intelligence (that apes). He is the scientific investigator, measuring the world with his dividers, a symbol used as far back as the Middle Ages for the human personality.



gle in a blue square, which represents the polar powers joined in harmony (9). The golden sun, symbol of higher knowledge, radiates out from her forehead (10). She has wings to show that she has been raised above earthly things (11). She is the Sophia, Divine Wisdom. This Sophia refers to the resolution of dualism which takes up all the upper part of the painting where I have followed one of

the essentials of alchemy: the conjunction of opposites. The pillars finish in two alchemical dragons which represent the various cosmic principles of polarized power. They retain their respective colors up to the point where their necks entwine, when an intense exchange of powers takes place in which both red and blue become a radiant golden yellow (the colour of insight, the higher Mercury) (12). The Androgyne, the mythical dual being, in which the masculine and feminine merge to form a perfect human, rises from the fire like a phoenix (13).

This resolution of all human dualism is the deepest mystery and highest goal of alchemy. The Androgyne is also represented as a double-headed eagle (a heraldic symbol) (14). Masonic symbols have been used to show that the actions of the perfect human being encompass both of its poles: dividers for the aspect of strength (15) and the carpenter's square for the aspect of form (16).

Now on to the magical seals taken from the hierarchy of angels and other astral beings that fall under Mercury. Starting at the top of the frame,

going from left to right, they are: the planetary seal of the angel Ophiel (17); centre top, the signature of the archangel of Mercury, Raphael (18), and, next to that, the seal of the Olympic planetary spirits of Mercury (19).

Just under the red dragon's belly can be seen the seal of the planetary spirits that are subordinate to the angel Ophiel (20) and under the blue dragon's belly the signature of the planetary intelligence Tiriel (21).

Since Mercury represents thought, a neutral faculty that is used in everything, one can talk of a higher and a lower Mercury. Thus in ancient times Mercury was considered the god of wisdom and knowledge every bit as much as the god of merchants, liars and thieves. (Mercury stole Apollo's bullocks.) One of the most important processes in the Great Work of alchemy, the sublimation of quicksilver or mercury, represents the process of ennoblement of thought. The result was known as *Mercurius Sublimatus* in alchemy and is referred to in various secret signs; six of these I have drawn on either side of the central staff of Mercury (22). (Continued) □

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