

1. How the Myth Arose

1.1. The „Lohengrin“ of the 20th Century

*Never shall you ask me
Nor trouble yourself to know
What journey brought me hither
Nor my true name and origin*

R. Wagner, *Lohengrin*, Act I

S. O. Prokofieff made his début as an author on Anthroposophical themes in 1981, when he published his first book under the significant, indeed momentous title „Rudolf Steiner and the Founding of the New Mysteries“ (Stuttgart 1982). Despite the youthful age of the author – he was 26 years at the time – it was quite clear from the very first pages: Here was someone who had come to Anthroposophy, who intended to step forward not as a pupil, but as an independent researcher and even as a teacher. It is striking with what pretention, unusual in Anthroposophical circles, he instructs the reader (in magisterial tones) on the task of the Anthroposophical Society and of each individual Anthroposophist. There are a large number of directives that we are urged to follow: what every Anthroposophist must be aware of, what the spiritual mission of the Anthroposophical Society is, what the conditions are for its realization, on what the further development of Christian culture depends, etc. etc. As Prokofieff, already in the foreword, is outlining the theme of his book in so grandiose a way, we discover that it is not based, as one might have assumed in such a case, on a study of the communications of Rudolf Steiner on the subject, but on the contents of lectures of his own whose aim was – no more and no less – „to present the essential meaning of the Christmas Conference ... as the culmination (Höhepunkt) of Rudolf Steiner’s life-path, and, at the same time, as the most important event to have occurred in the 20th century“ (I, p. 12, 375).

It is not unnatural, when one reads such statements, to ask: When and in what way could a human being who has not yet reached the age of the Mind-soul, penetrate so profoundly the significance of this truly remarkable event and presume to „reveal“ it to others, first in lectures and then in this book? Reading on,

one’s astonishment grows still further to hear how the author intends to describe the biography of Rudolf Steiner as an „archetypal image of the modern path of Initiation“ (ibid., p. 19), and to explain „the role which the course of this life will play for mankind as a whole“ (I, p. 19). Prokofieff goes on to introduce his own concept of the Biography of Rudolf Steiner – and therewith also his own „archetypal image“ of the new path of Initiation?!

Looking at the main section of the book, we find that here we are required to divide the course of Rudolf Steiner’s life into seven-year periods. Down to the smallest detail we find described how and when which spiritual beings inspired Rudolf Steiner, what processes took place in his „sheaths“, and when he attained which degrees of Initiation. And here one cannot help asking: What lofty standpoint of observation has the author attained, enabling him to take in at a single glance the spiritual path of an individuality such as Rudolf Steiner, and with unshakeable certainty to describe the occult background at every stage?

In another part of the book Prokofieff gives an account of his own view of the Christmas Conference, through which its „innermost being“ is revealed, and where he tells us, among other things, that the Foundation Stone Meditation is none other than the „[new] Michaelic Grail“ (ibid., p. 385), which descended during the Christmas Conference. Here he recommends his own imagination of the Grail, when he declares that it – i.e. his imagination – wills to become reality in the souls of human beings! (ibid., p. 381).

In this way Prokofieff obliges not only the Anthroposophists, but human beings in general, to place their confidence in the reliability of his imagination, so that they may take part in the new Grail cult proclaimed by him.

The standpoint adopted by Prokofieff in his perception of events, he describes as „extremely occult“ (ibid., p. 491). His thoughts are presented in a manner that can only be termed „dogmatic“. He also excludes the possibility that any doubt might arise in the mind of the reader.

With the fervour of a prophet (we take this from the content and do not mean it judgmentally), he proclaims to the Anthroposophists the true sense of their destiny past and future, discloses here and there the as yet unrecognized meaning of some statement of Rudolf Steiner, paints the perspectives of the development of Anthroposophy in connection with the destiny of human culture as a whole.

The tendencies indicated here are carried further in other works of Prokofieff. In every one of them he pretends to be in possession of the absolute, all-embracing standpoint, and tirelessly astounds the reader with ever new occult communications, though without informing us of their source or explaining how to gain access to them ourselves.

Thus, in „The Cycle of the Year as a Path of Initiation“ (II), which was written shortly after „The Founding ...“, he describes to us what happened to the ether-body of Rudolf Steiner after his physical death, and what is supposed to happen to this ether-body in the course of the 20th century (II, p. 259). Proceeding from this he confronts the Anthroposophists with an urgent and [most important] task (II, p. 259 [p. 266]). But how could we take on such a task, or fulfil it, if – we repeat – we do not know how he became aware of these particulars regarding the destiny of Rudolf Steiner after his death?

In Ch. 5 of the same book the reader can find a pointer to the sources of Prokofieff's insights, when he elaborates his view of the events in Palestine and the deeds of the Nathan Soul. He sums up as follows: „This is the [total picture] of these events from the [standpoint of the] Cosmos“ (II, p. 188 [p. 196]). How is it possible for the Cosmos which, following Rudolf Steiner's indications, consists of a multiplicity of different spiritual beings – who, according to their position engage in conflict with one another – to arrive at a unified standpoint? – As no answer to this is to be found in Prokofieff's book, we have no alternative but to seek it ourselves. Whatever the case may be: this Cosmos has revealed itself to Prokofieff. And of course one who surveys events from so lofty a standpoint and gives communications concerning the destiny of great initiates after their death, is all the more qualified to make statements about the tasks of ordinary Anthroposophists. Such is the logic of the book.

In the book on Russia „The Spiritual Origins of Eastern Europe and the Future Mysteries of the Holy Grail“ (Dornach 1989; IV) Prokofieff takes it upon himself „to explain“ the meaning of Russian history „from [the highest and at the same time most spiritual standpoint, namely] from the standpoint of the all-encompassing powers of World-Karma“ (ibid., p. 372 [p. 348]). What kind of beings these powers are Prokofieff does not tell us, but the reader who is prepared for the author's exposition will probably not be surprised to learn that the standpoint of these powers is known to him. The question has to be asked: How does the author know what is the „highest“ and the „most spiritual“? – This

would require the ability to permeate the spiritual cosmos with one's I-consciousness, the ability to assume the standpoint of the Creator Himself. Were this feasible we would have readily concurred if Prokofieff had gone on to inform us what tasks, „the higher guiding powers of Earth evolution“ had to fulfil, and at what point in time (ibid., p. 383), without asking, of course, how he came to know that as well.

On what familiar terms Prokofieff stands with the exalted spiritual beings is illustrated in the following statement: „The leading spirit of esoteric Christianity made the decision, at the time when the Spirits of Form were preparing to let their forces flow into a11 human souls around the year 1250, [as an extremely rare exception] to make public a part of the secret knowledge concerning the Mysteries of the Grail“ (ibid., p. 109 [p. 105]). So that is how things stand! If a man carries the responsibility for everything that he writes and publishes, then what he writes must be transparent – we can therefore do no other than accept that Prokofieff knows exactly what decision was taken by the spiritual being in question at what point in time; he knows also what activity the Spirits of Form were engaged in at that time. He also knows that someone asked this spiritual being for permission, which was granted, but as an extremely rare exception, from which we conclude that Prokofieff knows the rules normally followed by this spiritual being, and also the exceptions which it sometimes allows. It is also clear that Prokofieff knows who puts the intentions of this spirit into effect on the Earth, and in what way. On p. 103 he writes: „In the strictly-hidden (but accessible to him) circles of esoteric Christianity the decision is taken to make public some of the secrets of the Grail Mysteries in the form of an exoteric legend.“

Here one might add that the reader, in connection with the Grail theme brought up by Prokofieff, can learn of further sensational discoveries made by the author. He tells us, for example, that the Russian church cupola corresponds to an astral imagination of the Grail Cup (ibid., p. 71). He refers us here to Rudolf Steiner, who explained that all processes in the astral world occur in mirrored form. Prokofieff concludes from this: In order to obtain an astral imagination of the Cup, it is enough to turn it upside-down! – Prokofieff draws his idea of the cupola as an inverted Grail Cup, from a source known to us, but which he does not mention. This is an article by Nikolai Belotsvyetov about the Russian Grail, which Prokofieff read before the book in question was written. It is also interesting to note that Belotsvyetov was a friend and ardent disciple of Valentin

Tomberg, whom Prokofieff has vehemently criticized in recent years. The question arises: How did Belotsvyetov come to grasp the significance of the cupola from of the Orthodox churches? – But as he himself admits – it just seemed to him to be so! And Prokofieff's grounds are shakier still.

The comparison of the cupola with a cup is a harmless and at the same time unscientific expression of artistic liberty; more serious are a number of other assertions of Prokofieff concerning the Grail theme. Thus he writes: „... many of these elected living dead (referring to the chosen souls of the dead as guardians of the Holy Grail) ... [were] incarnated in their former life within the Eastern Slavic people“ (ibid., p. 100). One such guardian Prokofieff claims to be Count Yuri Vzevolodovich, whose after-death experience he describes. Already during his lifetime, Prokofieff says, „this Count had, together with his uncle Andrei Bogolyubsky, placed his sheaths at the disposal of Grail knights so that they could work through these Russian nobles“ (ibid., p. 101-103).

One gains the impression that Prokofieff is initiated not only into the destiny of individuals, but also into the Mysteries of the Grail. He tells us that „in the Grail Mysteries there are as it were three circles to be distinguished in the spiritual worlds“, and gives an exact description of these groups; he also points to concrete individuals who have belonged to this or that group (p. 101), but forgets, here too, to reveal the sources of his information.

Some readers will think, perhaps, that we are falling into an ironical tone. In reality we are merely trying not to lose our sense of humour in the face of what some people allow themselves in their handling of the precious heritage of Rudolf Steiner.

Prokofieff positively asks us to see in him the returning Lohengrin (mention of whose name is clearly not accidental), and thus to believe his every word and recognize him as a spiritual leader; but the essential point is that we are never allowed to ask about his „name and origin“ – i.e. the source of his occult knowledge, which is seemingly boundless.

Now a further example to add to our revelations. Here too we do not believe in a miraculous spate of coincidences or acts of Providence, but recognize Prokofieff's intention at the place where – citing a conversation of Rudolf Steiner with Count L. Polzer-Hoditz – he describes in what way Rudolf Steiner intended to set up an esoteric school founded on the Christmas Conference. And

then it emerges that this institution corresponds exactly to what Prokofieff – without indicating the source – has described earlier as Grail Mysteries in the spiritual world (ibid., p. 102, 478).

In spite of this, he concludes that the esoteric school is intended as a „mirror reflection“, in the Earthly realm, of the Grail Mysteries. This assertion is not new, as already in the 1st book the „Foundation Stone“ was said to be the new Grail! As Prokofieff does not reckon with a good memory on the reader's part, he himself emphasizes this amazing correspondence in the occult facts brought forward by him and gives the following reference: Concerning the Christmas Foundation of 1923-24 as a contemporary revelation of the Grail Mysteries on Earth, see – „Rudolf Steiner and the Founding of the New Mysteries“ Part III (ibid., p. 478).

In the book on Russia Prokofieff discloses further, hitherto unknown, occult facts, in some cases saying nothing of the sources (meaning very likely that they are his own), and in others proceeding in a similarly unscientific and improper manner; such lapses result not only in a loss of trust, but also of authority. In the course of his exposition Prokofieff occasionally quotes statements of Rudolf Steiner and gives the references in such a way that the reader is led to believe that the rest of the text also comes from this lecture. Possibly he does not want the reader to ask „forbidden questions“, which could unmask his – Lohengrin's – incognito.

But on one occasion he did make a slip of the tongue. This happened at the place where the subject was again the Grail stream, which he was then connecting with the working of Skythianos, stating that the most advanced and especially well prepared pupils of Skythianos were Joseph of Arimathia and Nicodemus. He describes in detail the manner of their initiation and the tasks entrusted to them (ibid., Part 3). Here Prokofieff decides to give some clarification, and remarks in passing that „this indication ... is not a direct communication (an 'indication' is not a 'communication'!) of Rudolf Steiner, but the result of meditative work of the author over many years“ (ibid., p. 439). Thus we hear that Prokofieff has been active meditatively for many years, so that we can assume that other communications too are the fruit of this work and the result of his independent research in the spiritual world – beginning with the very first lectures and books.

In the Anthroposophical Society there is another person who appeared at so young an age as an independent researcher and teacher: Valentin Tomberg. At the time Marie Steiner made the following comment: „Is it conceivable that so young a man as Herr Tomberg, who turned 35 a short time ago, has the necessary maturity for an occult teacher? (We remind readers that Prokofieff held the lectures in which he intended, on the basis of his own research, to reveal the deeper significance of the Christmas Conference, in 1979 – i.e. at the age of 25!). Dr. Steiner often stressed that he himself had not come forward as an occult teacher until the age of 40, and that this corresponds to an esoteric law. The law of gradual maturing outwardly and inwardly likewise calls for this restraint. He indicated as a criterion for the level of maturity of the person who believes he has to present himself as a spiritual researcher, that he should have the patience to wait, and test and test again, and should not assume that before this time he has the capacity to judge his own faculty of knowledge“ (Marie Steiner, „Letters and Documents“, Dornach 1981, p. 324-325).

We have now reached the point where we have to ask the question: What is the nature of Prokofieff’s faculty of knowledge, and what does he himself believe in this connection? Judging by the significance of the facts revealed by him, the breadth of his perspective, the deep conviction resonating in all he says, one could believe that we have to do with an occultist of high degree, an initiate who is fully aware of his rank, and claims the right to work accordingly. If, on the other hand, we examine the fruits – the tree is known by the fruits – i.e. his numerous works, then we are led to the conviction that the expositions, where thinking is concerned, are not worked through clearly, but are inconsistent; there is a great amount of logical absurdity, lack of clarity, and contradiction. These weaknesses of the author on the thinking level stand in striking contrast to his pretensions. As we will be showing in the following chapters of this book, there are to be found in his works contradictions not only to the statements of Rudolf Steiner, but also to historical facts and to healthy common-sense. What, in these circumstances, is the value of his many years of meditative work; on what kind of experience are his communications based; and, finally, what is the nature of his cognitive method? For if in his research he were using the same method as Rudolf Steiner, he could not arrive at results and judgments that contradict those of Rudolf Steiner. Perhaps he doubts the possibility of obtaining objective, reliable insights into the spiritual world through the Anthroposophical method, and does not use it; that this may be the case is

suggested by the fact that in his works he gives no sign of having a connection to this method – indeed, there is no mention of method at all; he makes known the results of his occult research as something natural and obvious which must be accepted by the Anthroposophical readership „as is fit and proper“.

Our theory has been given added weight, thanks to the circumstance that someone once asked „the forbidden question“.

1.2. The Question of Method: the Occult Autobiography of Prokofieff

On the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the founding of their publishing house the staff of the Verlag Freies Geistesleben approached Mr. Prokofieff with the request for a description of the way in which the content of his first book had arisen. He responded with an autobiographical essay giving an account of his spiritual path of development. This appeared in the Jubilee Volume („Reading the Anthroposophical Book – an Almanac“, Stuttgart 1987) under the title „My Path to the Book ‘Rudolf Steiner and the Founding of the New Mysteries’“.

In view of the fact that the ability to gain knowledge in the spiritual world can, as we have already noted, only be acquired on the path of inner development, this article is of very special interest for us. The path described in it should be considered from the standpoint of the fulfilment of the requirements demanded of the serious spiritual pupil. To these belong above all the acquiring of a balanced, healthy soul-life that remains in touch with reality, the renunciation of idle dreams, false mysticism and fantasies, the development of a logically-structured thinking that is oriented to the real world, and the overcoming of one-sided, overhasty and arbitrary judgments; and also a comprehensive, deepened self-knowledge, the climax of which is attained in the meeting with the Guardian of the Threshold. – This meeting must be borne in mind here, as we will be speaking shortly of independent occult experience.

In this article the impressions (Erlebnisse) of a very young person are described, a fact which might incline the reader to a lenient judgment. But in the case under consideration leniency would be inappropriate, as these very impressions are the way leading to that occult experience which provides the foundation for Prokofieff’s entire subsequent work in Anthroposophy. This be-

ing so, we are obliged to view them in the light of all the requirements of the inner path. In addition, one should not forget that we are speaking not of youthful diary notes, but with the „Rückschau“ of a 32-year-old man who has risen to considerable celebrity in Anthroposophical circles. The way in which Prokofieff evaluates the experiences of his childhood and youth, what conclusion he draws from them, gives us a telling illustration of his relation to the faculty of knowledge, not only with regard to himself, but also in general.

At the beginning of his essay Prokofieff confesses that at first he had wanted to decline the request to write it, as „it has always been my aim to exclude everything of a ‘personal’ nature from my work“ („My Path to the Book ...“, p. 79). On the other hand the writing of the book was „bound up with certain spiritual-occult experiences which as such cannot be published in an essay“ (ibid.).

Regarding the first statement of the author, it turns out that the entire content of the essay serves to refute this, as the most important factors leading Prokofieff on the path to the book prove to be various kinds of secret presentiments, unclear inner feelings, personal impressions and sudden surges of emotion, youthful enthusiasm and mystical communications, in short: all those elements of the subjective, which are the wholly personal content of the inner life of the idealistically-inclined young person. Nevertheless the author proceeds, on the basis of all these experiences, which everyone is familiar with from their youth, to draw far-reaching, all-embracing conclusions, particularly with regard to himself. Here we have to do with a specific personal tendency. But how is one to relate this to the assertion that everything of a „personal“ nature must be excluded? In order to understand this paradox a statement of Rudolf Steiner can help us: „A person is working with others in the Anthroposophical movement ... but he brings into this work personal ambitions, personal intentions, personal qualities ... Most people do not know that these are personal ... Most people look upon what they are doing as impersonal, because they deceive themselves as to what is personal or impersonal“ (GA 261, p. 306).

With regard to those „occult experiences“ of his, which as such cannot be published in an essay, there is a reply to be given, since we are dealing here with a book in which the author is imparting teachings to the reader on crucial matters connected with the development of Anthroposophy. In the course of this he makes a series of statements relating to supersensible facts, whose source, however, is not the results of Rudolf Steiner’s research. If, therefore, these state-

ments are based on individual occult experiences of Prokofieff himself, then these must be made known publicly, so that they can be the object of open discussion. Only in this way can the reader acquire a basis for judgment in the question how far these experiences are credible and meet the requirements of objectivity which are placed on supersensible experience by spiritual science. Regarding the task of the Anthroposophical Society which was founded during the Christmas Conference, Rudolf Steiner said the following: „We must be quite clear that our Society in particular will have the task of combining the greatest possible openness to the public (Öffentlichkeit) with true and genuine esotericism“ (26.12.1923, 10 a.m., GA 260). Examples of such a combination of these two are found in many lectures of Rudolf Steiner himself, in which, in contrast to Prokofieff, he finds it appropriate to give his listeners not only descriptions of his occult experiences, but also to disclose the method he uses in his research into the higher worlds.

Let us now follow Prokofieff’s path further, so as to learn about its characteristics more precisely, and let us try to grasp the quality of his experiences in order to find in them, perhaps, traces of genuine knowledge and self-knowledge; let us also examine his views on occult experience and ascertain how far he possesses the capacity and the inclination to work it through properly. In short: let us compare his path with the demands that are made of a spiritual pupil.

Prokofieff tells us that in his childhood he received profound impressions from Richard Wagner’s music, particularly his „Parsifal“. In his article he refers to this fact as a part of his path. We cannot expect him to say: „I enjoyed the musical dramas of Wagner, they interested me and left me with this or that impression.“ – This would have been a gesture of modesty, although many people know the depth of feeling, the variety and sublimity of the characters, the truly exalted inspiration and the stirring presentiments that can be experienced thanks to Wagner’s musical creations. Indeed, many people must have these experiences, but the question remains: How does one relate to them? Should one merely acknowledge them as experiences of the human soul, or ascribe to them a significance they do not possess? Prokofieff unhesitatingly speaks of them as a „meeting (Berührung) with the stream of esoteric Christianity ... there arose, after this impulse had been received (into him), the question that filled my entire being: Where is to be found today the continuation, in contemporary form, of this spiritual stream?“ („My Path ...“, p. 81). Let us not forget that we are speaking here of a child between 7 and 14 years. To say something

of this kind about himself would not even have occurred to Richard Wagner in his maturity, although he is not accused of false modesty either; nevertheless he really did take this impulse into himself, and in his creation drew from the source of lofty inspiration, doing so, as he himself testifies, quite consciously.

Thus Prokofieff, when he had barely completed his change of teeth, was able to receive into his soul the impulse of esoteric Christianity. Then his soul was filled with a „new, inner striving“ (he says nothing about the previous, old one), which acquainted him with Eastern wisdom. In it he discovered – this, too, in early childhood – „a profound esoteric knowledge“, although he continued to feel that in Christianity „still higher and more encompassing treasures of wisdom are contained than in the religious and philosophical systems of the East“ (ibid., p. 81-82). Thus it becomes clear that in him the capacity awoke at a very early age to make comparisons between the treasures of universal esoteric wisdom, in respect of their scope and their content.

When Prokofieff was about 14 he came upon Rudolf Steiner's book „Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment“, and here something peculiar happened. The last two chapters aroused in him „feelings of different kinds“. On the one hand „a sense of my own inner imperfection“, called forth by „the description of the meeting of the spiritual pupil with the Lesser Guardian of the Threshold“ (ibid., p. 83).

How often did Rudolf Steiner point out that the human being who, in one way or another, has penetrated into the spiritual world without the meeting with the Guardian of the Threshold, becomes a victim of his own illusions and of the powers of opposition who lie in wait at the boundary between the world of the senses and the supersensible world. He emphasizes that the meeting with the Guardian of the Threshold is a real, occult fact, a concrete experience in the state of supersensible perception; something of this nature cannot be experienced only in the imagination (Vorstellung). In one lecture Rudolf Steiner says: „The meeting with the Guardian of the Threshold is a tragic occurrence, a life-struggle, with respect to all laws of knowledge, and with respect to all connections of the human being with the spiritual world, with Ahriman and Lucifer. This life-catastrophe must come about, if one wishes to meet the Guardian of the Threshold. If it impinges upon the human being merely in dreamlike imagination, then this means that one wants comfortably to steal past, in order to

have as a substitute – people are now very fond of substitutes – the dream of the Guardian of the Threshold“ (6.8.1918, GA 181).

As we have seen, in Prokofieff's case we have to do not even with a dreamlike imagination, but with a feeling that arose while the book was being read. He experiences the meeting – if one can call it a meeting – with the Guardian only on the level of fantasy (Einbildung). And in this case how can we discount the possibility that all his later „occult experiences“ are products of fantasy (Einbildung)?

We should bear in mind, of course, that the event described by Prokofieff was accompanied by a process of self-knowledge. But this process resembled a tiny cloud passing across the radiant firmament, so insignificant that it can vanish without trace at any moment; thus no mention is made of it again. On the contrary, in the course of this essay the picture of an ideal human being arises before our inner eye; one could even say a being who has become ideal already through inheritance, if one considers how his own family is characterized. Veneration and gratitude towards one's own family are in themselves natural and praiseworthy qualities, although in the case of the author who grew up in such privileged circumstances it is unclear what he means to express by saying that he was born and grew up „in the very difficult spiritual conditions prevailing in Eastern Europe“, but – in spite of all this – „found the way not only to Anthroposophy in general, but to those special questions which are, in a certain sense, the central ones“ („My Path ...“, p. 78-80; i.e. the Christmas Conference). What does he really know of those difficulties of a spiritual, soul and material nature which his compatriots had to endure at that time? In the autobiographical essay nothing of this is mentioned at all. Nor is any word spoken indicating a relation to the situation in the present; there is no suggestion of any life-experience in this connection, nor even of any interest in the reality surrounding him.

In Rudolf Steiner's book „Knowledge of Higher Worlds“ it is shown how the spiritual pupil can develop the necessary soul qualities by going through the trials brought to him by destiny. There have been, and still are, very many people in Russia who have had, or have still today, to go through such a hard school of life. This cup passed Prokofieff by. But in such a case the pupil must develop the required soul qualities through conscious work on himself. „It is one of the unavoidable tasks“, says Rudolf Steiner, „to be fulfilled by every spiritual pu-

pil, that he must work painstakingly upon himself, so as not to become a fantasist, a person who can fall victim to any kind of deception, self-deception" (suggestion and auto-suggestion) (GA 13, p. 382).

Concerning the steps that are necessary for an occult development that is followed through in full consistency, and lead to the strengthening of a healthy faculty of judgment, feeling and character, Prokofieff has nothing to say. On the contrary, against the background of a lack of life-experience and of any corresponding preparation, he takes up serious esoteric exercises. This happens in the following way:

Likewise around the age of 14 Prokofieff becomes acquainted with the French edition of „Outline of Occult Science“. As he does not know this language well enough he does not read the whole book, but discovers in it straight away the description of the Rose-Cross meditation. Its imaginative form makes a deep impression on him – which is quite understandable, considering that at this stage in the child's development those forces especially have a strong influence, on which the faculty of imagination rests. He starts to meditate. Those forces which are needed for the building up of his soul and bodily organization, are diverted in the direction of occult practice.

After this, he obtains „Occult Science“ in Russian. Just at this age, after the freeing of the astral body from its connection to the parents, the young person attains a special capacity to relate to figures of an ideal nature (Vorbilder), and also an inclination to fantasy (c.f. 4.1.1922, GA 303): „... the picture of the entire world-evolution beheld in spirit“, as described in Occult Science, makes a powerful impression on him. We take him at his word, but we would like to add that he wrote his article, not at that tender age, but after completion of his 32nd year. This does not prevent him from declaring that the most important result of reading of „Occult Science“ was the *e n t r y* – not the acquaintance with, the knowledge or study of, but the *e n t r y*! – „into a new spiritual Cosmos, which exceeded in grandeur and sublimity all that I had experienced hitherto“ („My Path ...“, p. 84; he does not say anything here either, about the „old spiritual Cosmos“, or what he had experienced hitherto).

It was not Rudolf Steiner's intention with his „Occult Science“ to present the reader with a finished „spiritual cosmos“. Later he said of it that it was no more than a „score“, and that the reader would have to work through the content in strenuous inner activity in order to arrive at the whole (4.5.1920, GA 334). Pro-

kofieff was content with religious enthusiasm, and passed it by. In later life he never made up for this childhood omission. As we will see later on, „Occult Science“ remained an unread book for him.

Let us now make a pause in our critical analysis and reflect upon the uncritical enthusiasts of Prokofieff's occult gift; these admirers are certainly indignant over our „heretical“ book. But we would point out the following: If someone writes an autobiography and publishes it, he gives the reader the right to think about the content and thus to try to understand the person who has written it. Only legends of the Saints are approached in a different way – but they are not autobiographies!

But let us continue. After Prokofieff met the Guardian of the Threshold in his imagination, he entered – again in his imagination – the new spiritual Cosmos. In his opinion the process of knowledge is advancing very successfully, as shown by the fact that, when it has hardly begun, it leads swiftly to a resounding climax. And what knowledge? – The knowledge that the „Cosmic Christ is the central point of the spiritual Cosmos. There now grew together with the inner feeling, as it had lived in my soul [since early childhood] (sic!), that this fact is incontrovertible truth ... the sure and encompassing knowledge [of it]“ („My Path ...“, p. 84). Now we must ask ourselves how many of the great spiritual figures have achieved such outstanding results on the path of cognition – knowledge of the spiritual Cosmos – and that already in their earliest youth (between their 14th and 19th year), and moreover without any special effort or preparation? At this point, so it seems to us, the reader of the autobiographical essay is asked to remain bowed in silent awe.

The feeling for his own lofty calling, which he has no inclination to reflect upon, takes hold of his entire being: „... in the period between my 14th and 19th years [I was able] to get to know the basic works of Rudolf Steiner, and other spiritual-occult works by authors of Eastern, Theosophical, and mystical-ecclesiastical schools of thought. I spent these five years for the most part in spiritual solitude ... In the course of this period, supported only by my own inner forces and by my search for an answer to the life-question that confronted me ... I was to choose Anthroposophy as the task of my entire life, as my destiny in the world“ (ibid., p. 86).

What „inner forces“ can give support to a still immature young person? But let us hear all the same what Rudolf Steiner says about the healthy development of

the human being at this age: „At puberty the human being is ejected from the spirit and soul life of the world, and is thrust into the external world, which he can only perceive with his physical, his etheric body“ (4.1.1922, GA 303). In Prokofieff's case we hear the opposite: At this age, according to his own words, he enters the „spiritual Cosmos“. When the young person in the normal course of development is then cast out of the soul-spiritual life of the world, he compares „the world he enters ... with the world which he had had within him before“, and he grows aware of the contrast between them. Therefore the „tumult“ is needed, „which arises in the interplay between man and the world in the period between the 14th/15th year and the beginning of the 20's. This tumult must be there ... [must] arise of necessity. People who are perhaps over-inclined to melancholy might imagine it would be a good thing to spare the human being this tumult. But in this way one becomes his worst enemy. One should not spare the human being this tumult“ (ibid.). Prokofieff was spared this tumult, this inner upheaval. There did not awaken in him a healthy relation to the outer world, or any living experience of it; hence there are no contrasting feelings, no upheaval. He remains under the spell of his subjective experiences. The new „discoveries“ are no more than a „final confirmation“ of his „presentiment“, which has been living in his soul from early childhood; the world of his dreams flows on in wonderful harmony, and acquaintance with Anthroposophy merely arouses the indistinct feelings that have long been slumbering in his soul.

Against the background of this ever-heightened ecstasy, as the above-mentioned phase in a healthy development is bypassed, the development of an independent power of judgment which is accompanied in the young person by a decided mood of protest against authorities of all possible kinds does not take place and he does not await his coming-of-age, the author comes to the decisive conclusion regarding his higher mission in the world, a world of which, so the account of his life would lead us to suppose, he has very little idea.

„And only ... when I ... could experience“, he writes, „that my life had acquired a new meaning and a new goal (and again we must ask: What, then, were previously the 'meaning' and the 'goal' in the life of this young person?), and I had thus begun consciously to serve those ideals which had hitherto lived unconsciously (untergründig) in my soul, and which, thanks to spiritual science, had now become fully conscious reality for me ...“ („My Path ...“, p. 86). What kind of conscious service can this be, in someone who has not become

conscious of himself, in whom (corresponding to his age) the Sentient soul is not yet fully developed?

Here one or another reader might object: Why all this schematic thinking? In the lives of great individualities things can surely follow a quite different course. We are not discussing here how high entelechies, incarnating in a physical body, can bypass the general laws of development. We merely recall that Prokofieff himself in his book brought the life of Rudolf Steiner into a scheme in exactly the same way, placing all the events in his life and his spiritual development into the corresponding 7-year phases, and making no „special allowances“ for Rudolf Steiner as an outstanding personality. But nobody has raised any objection against this. If anyone is of the opinion that Prokofieff stands on a higher level than Rudolf Steiner, then he can challenge our right to proceed with him in the same way.

After this Prokofieff gets to know the lecture-cycles of Rudolf Steiner. The following words tell us what significance this had for him: „Through this Cycle a quite new world opened up for me again“ (ibid., pa. 87). But how can, yet again, a quite new world open up, and in what way can this „quite new world“ be opened up for a man who is already in possession of an „incontrovertible truth“ and an encompassing knowledge of the spiritual Cosmos? To this question there is only one answer: the number of worlds that can be experienced subjectively, in the fantasy, is inexhaustible. Here one can even discover a new world for oneself every day. And if we are not right in this, then we can only state the following: Prokofieff does not himself realize what he is writing down, what words he is using etc.

In his thinking Prokofieff follows his soul-experiences, unremittingly and without contradiction – but he has no knowledge of his own motives. On the basis of the enthusiasm and ecstasy he experiences while reading the books and lectures of Rudolf Steiner, he builds up in his fantasy ever new worlds, within which he experiences himself in a special way as a chosen vessel. And for him this is the most important thing. This fact comes to expression most clearly in the following passage: An Anthroposophical friend of Prokofieff recommends to him the three well-known Arnheim lectures from the 6th Karma volume, „remarking with a somewhat mysterious expression that there is something very important in it concerning the Karma of the Anthroposophists, i.e. our own Karma“. At this Prokofieff is overcome by an unusual state of agitation, he is

gripped – as so often before – „by the abundance of new feelings“, and even finds himself „almost speechless“ ... But he makes no attempt whatever to restore his soul-balance – on the contrary, he justifies and applauds his condition, which he terms „spiritual enthusiasm“, the source of which he sees arising „from a memory, hidden in the innermost depths of soul, of the events experienced there“ (ibid., p. 89). What is the nature of these events, and what does he „preserve“ in the depths of his soul? – After reading the lectures he sees himself as one of those who, in the 15th century, gathered around Michael in his supersensible school, and in spirit he sees how the 1st Hierarchy carries over the cosmic intelligence from the lap of the 2nd Hierarchy into the heads of human beings. With what justification does he come so quickly and with such certainty to this significant conclusion regarding himself? – Here again, the same as before: solely on the basis of the feelings which came to him as he read the lectures.

Here we encounter an amazing quality of this author. He takes into himself the description of the events of world significance, which transcend by far the average human powers of comprehension. But from the point of view of knowledge he shows no interest in it, no questions arise in him, no desire to fathom what happened there and in what way; nor has his soul any wish to bring what he has experienced into connection with what he already knows from Anthroposophy. He simply accepts everything as „his own“, and goes on to concentrate entirely on his own person. However, „so long as the human being still has the tendency“ – Rudolf Steiner writes in „Theosophy“ – „to overvalue himself at the expense of the world around him, he places obstacles on his path to higher knowledge. Whoever surrenders himself to the pleasure or the pain arising for him in connection with every thing or event in the world, is caught up in such an overvaluing of himself. For his pleasure and his pain tell him nothing about the things, but only tell him something about himself“ (GA 9, p. 178-179).

Hardly was the sleepless night over, in which Prokofieff had read these lectures, than he came promptly to the conclusion: „Now I knew the spiritual being whom I had always served (when?) and to whom I wished to surrender my entire being“ („My Path ...“, p. 90; he mentions the Archangel Michael). But why „I knew“? In what way was this knowledge acquired? – Here it becomes clear that Prokofieff means by „knowledge“ – arbitrary conclusions (also, when such a case arises, in relation to himself), drawn on the basis of indeterminate,

but turbulent stirrings in his soul sphere. „For me“ – he continues – „this experience represented a kind of inner response to the necessity of which Rudolf Steiner spoke at the beginning of the Arnheim lecture – ‘to present oneself in life as a true representative of the Anthroposophical movement’, ‘to represent Anthroposophy in the world through one’s own personality’.“ (ibid.).

What an opinion of oneself! – Only feelings of uneasiness are aroused in the reader, who begins to experience gnawing shame on the writer’s behalf.

After Prokofieff had over-(ful)filled himself with such a feeling of his own importance, there followed another „bold“ thought, namely that not even Rudolf Steiner is great enough to make demands of him, Prokofieff. – How else is one to explain the fact that he reduces Rudolf Steiner to the level – forgive me – of a „microphone“, for he declares categorically: „I experienced with absolute certainty that this demand [to be a representative of Anthroposophy] does not actually come from Rudolf Steiner, but through Rudolf Steiner from Michael himself, and that in this moment it was directed to me personally“ (ibid.; emphasis S.O.P.). What an opinion of himself!

And now, after (in this inspired state) he has heard from spiritual heights the personal call, he feels the irresistible wish to respond as quickly as possible, and so he decides to give expressions to his „inextinguishable“ loyalty (Treue) in the form of a vow. How such a vow might look concretely, of this he says nothing. But this does not deter him from drawing a parallel between himself and Rudolf Steiner, and so he writes: „Such occasions in life are moments when an inner vow or ‘promise’ is made. And we are amazed to hear Rudolf Steiner also speak in this Arnheim lecture of his promise to the spiritual world and the powers guiding him, and also of the ‘inextinguishable’ loyalty (Treue) towards the obligation he has taken on.“ (Here it is indicated, as though in passing, that Rudolf Steiner was acting not independently, out of individual freedom, but that he was simply being led by certain „powers“. But if this was so, why did he have, in addition, to make a promise to them?) – „At that time I could not yet express in words (meaning: he didn’t understand) what Rudolf Steiner meant by this ‘promise’, but I felt dimly (yet another vague feeling) that my ‘vow’ was in a mysterious way bound up with his ...“ (ibid.; emphasis S.O.P.). Thus in a deeply mysterious atmosphere and with vague romantic feelings Prokofieff, yielding to the impulses of his subconscious being, makes a vow whose significance he himself does not understand.

Prokofieff represents this experience „in the night“ as being his first meeting with the „essential being“ (Wesenskern) of the Christmas Conference. (No wonder this „essential being“ is shown in his first book to be an act of initiation performed on the Anthroposophists who were „sleeping“ at the time – but more of this later.) And how does he arrive at such a conception? Well, through drawing analogies to himself. – „After the Christmas Conference“, he reflects, „everything becomes different in the Anthroposophical movement and the Anthroposophical Society. ‘Behold, I make all things new’ (Rev. 21; 5) – this theme sounded from the lecture with especial force, and found a powerful echo in my soul. From now onwards, so I felt, everything in my life had to become new, for I had ‘made the vow’, the first conscious vow in my life“ (ibid., p. 91). But what strange things he is saying here! – Firstly, if in the Anthroposophical movement and Society everything becomes different, this means that even Anthroposophy is different after the Christmas Conference; and even the spiritual beings who have guided the Anthroposophical movement hitherto, are replaced by others; and is Rudolf Steiner perhaps no longer himself? ... Or is Prokofieff speaking here of a complicated spiritual metamorphoses whose essential character we are supposed to recognize? If so, we do not need to don the cloak of „unknowability“ (behind which Prokofieff takes refuge on his path of knowledge) in order to set a clear boundary between oneself and the intellectual amateurs. Is it possible to express oneself so carelessly in such fundamental questions?

Secondly, Prokofieff tells us earlier that he had already, about one year before the events described here, chosen „Anthroposophy as the task of (his) whole life, as (his) destiny in this world“ (ibid., p. 86). How are we to understand his statement to the effect that from then on everything in his life would have to be transformed? If we adopt Prokofieff’s standpoint, then the second point arises out of the first. – If, after the Christmas Conference, a completely new and different Anthroposophy arises, which Prokofieff now discovers for himself, then this means that a new vow must be made and everything in his life must be changed! How far this statement is not accidental, is reflected in his further activity. While he is ostensibly serving the impulse of the Christmas Conference, he goes on to develop an Anthroposophy which proves in reality to be something quite different.

A discussion of all these passages in the Prokofieff „Autobiography“ from the standpoint of the path of occult schooling is a tremendously difficult undertak-

ing, as there is no such path (as the one described by Prokofieff – Trans.); however, this does not hinder Prokofieff from portraying himself as an esoteric pupil of Rudolf Steiner. And this happens in the following way: After he has made a study of the events of the Christmas Conference he reads a book describing the difficulties that arose in the Anthroposophical Society after Rudolf Steiner’s death – and this makes him ill. The reasons for a physical illness can be many and varied, including quite prosaic ones. But he selects the one that allows him to surround the situation with the maximum degree of Romanticism: he connects this illness with the reading of the book in question, giving as a reason that the two events came together in time. It may well be that in the case of an impressionable soul such as Prokofieff (as was seen in the preceding descriptions), something of this kind is possible. But one must have a quite special relation to oneself, and build one’s own judgments entirely upon this, to draw such overhasty and far-reaching conclusions from an indisposition lasting only a few days. He describes it thus: „The book made such an impression on me, that for several days I was physically ill. This [difficult] experience conveyed to me, if only in a faint inkling, as I explained, a very real picture nevertheless of what it meant for Rudolf Steiner in 1923 to take on the Karma of the Society. Moreover, I had come to know through my own experience what it means to be a pupil of Rudolf Steiner, in this sphere also. I understood, now that I had experienced this (what, then?) right down into my physical body, that it is not possible to look for an answer to such questions through an external search for those ‘guilty’ or ‘not guilty’ with regard to events in the past. The [true] reality of what had happened lay far deeper, and one had to suffer it ...“ (ibid., 98-99; emphasis S.O.P.).

After a few days of illness Prokofieff believes, without seeking any other reason for it, that he belongs to the community of those who have to bear the Karma of the Anthroposophical Society, and to „suffer“ the true reality. He thereby side-stepped the necessity to come to a clear knowledge of it. Is it sufficient, in order to grasp the „true reality“ of the problems of the Anthroposophical Society, to read a book on the subject, to „listen in“ to one’s impressions, and give extra attention to one’s own state of bodily health? Prokofieff goes still further, for he believes that this is enough to qualify him as an esoteric pupil. It is possible that all previously valid conceptions of an esoteric pupilship are thereby turned on their heads. We are forced to admit that here we have really to do with something completely new!

And yet we ask ourselves: How does Prokofieff come to such a conclusion about himself? – Well, on the basis, as usual, of subjective feelings: „However, something quite new opened up for me as a result of this painful experience, for immediately afterwards I had the feeling that the spirit-form of the Teacher had come still closer to me than before, and that only now could I regard myself in the fullest sense as his esoteric pupil“ (ibid., p. 99; emphasis I.G.). Quite clearly he sees himself, in the fullest sense, as one of the esoteric pupils of Rudolf Steiner.

Therefore we would turn to the words of Rudolf Steiner regarding the conditions for esoteric pupilship. „The following rules should be observed in such a way“ – he writes in his „Instructions for an Esoteric Schooling“ – „that every esoteric pupil so directs his life, that he continually observes himself and checks whether in his inner being he is following the expected requirements. All esoteric schooling, especially when it ascends into the higher regions, can only lead to harm and to the confusion of the pupil if such rules are not observed ... Many a pupil deceives himself in this respect. He says: I wish to engage in the purest striving. – But if he were to examine himself more closely he would notice that a great deal of egoism, of subtle self-centred feeling is lurking in the background; it is particularly such feelings that very often put on the mask of selfless striving and mislead the pupil. One cannot too often seriously examine oneself through inner self-observation, to ascertain whether one has not, after all, feelings of this kind hidden in the inner regions of one’s soul. One will free oneself of such feelings more and more, through a determined adherence to the rules to be discussed here. These rules are, Firstly: **n o u n c o n t r o l l e d t h o u g h t s h a l l b e a l l o w e d t o e n t e r m y c o n s c i o u s n e s s**“ (GA 245, p. 22).

We ask ourselves whether these words of Rudolf Steiner are not a diagnosis of the „Path“ of Sergei Prokofieff.

The conceptions (Vorstellungen) formed by Prokofieff on the basis of Rudolf Steiner’s books and lectures, he does not question. He might decide to examine them and, for example, compare the new ones with those formed previously; but there is no question of this; rather the contrary: he enthusiastically discovers „new worlds“ every time; and the fact that they are always „new“ does not disturb him. (Yet another „world of completely new spirituality“ – i.e. not that which had revealed itself to him through the books and lectures of Rudolf

Steiner – he discovered when he got to know the German text of the Foundation Stone Meditation.) He does not „think through“ self-critically the conceptions (Vorstellungen) he has once formed, but after he has, so to speak, appropriated them he straight away turns his attention to the sentiments and feelings they have called up in him. But even the thoughts (Vorstellungen) that arise from the unconscious, and which he accepts without criticism as something natural and obvious, he follows attentively. This tendency, noticeable already in his youth, to follow all the feelings and thoughts (Vorstellungen) that arise in his soul, was allowed to develop because it remained unconscious and bore its fruits in his subsequent work. As we can see in his books, he develops in a narrow and one-sided way the conceptions that have formed in his soul in connection with this or that spiritual-scientific theme, and does not try to ascertain their correctness, either with reference to the facts of external reality, or to the communications of Rudolf Steiner.

Rudolf Steiner cites a further rule: „The necessity must stand before my soul in a living way, constantly to expand the sum of my conceptions (Vorstellungen)“ (ibid., p. 24).

Prokofieff’s striving for knowledge is confined solely to Anthroposophy. The rare facts that he brings into his books from outer culture and history, do not rise above the level of school textbooks. In Anthroposophy he is only interested in what fits in with his conceptions (Vorstellungen). In this way a science unfolds that is based on the method of Baron von Münchhausen. Prokofieff writes: „Initially with no support from without,* I had the task to find, proceeding only from my inner experiences in connection with the Foundation Stone Meditation and without any outside influence, my own personal relation to the Christmas Conference as the most important spiritual event on the physical plane in the 20th century“ (i.e. he even determined in advance what kind of personal relation this must be). And only „after this relationship had been established out of my own cognitive forces (Erkenntniskräfte), and had furthermore been transformed into unshakeable inner certainty (on what basis, one may ask?), did my further searching lead me, in late 1978, early 1979, to the discovery, one after the other, of three books about the Christmas Conference“ („My Path ...“, p. 96).

* Here we would inform the reader of a fact of Prokofieff’s biography which is not of an intimate nature: his maternal grandfather was an Anthroposophist.

Yet in these books he only allows those conceptions access to his consciousness, which are in accord with his feelings; all others are of no interest. – The reading of a lecture (the author's name is not mentioned) in which another view of the Christmas Conference is presented, does not give him cause for reflection. But the lecture, he writes, „being based only on speculative and external evidence, could have no influence on what, for me at that time, was already a fact of my own personal experience“ (ibid., Footnote p. 96-97).

Prokofieff appeals to his „own personal experience“. But experience is not knowledge. Experience – including soul-experiences – is only what is immediately „given“. The outer appearance of reality, given to us in experience, is not its true image, as this can only arise on condition that thinking is activated, which brings incomplete experience to completion through the disclosing of its true nature. These are the most elementary truths of Goetheanism.

But Prokofieff does not strive for knowledge, he does not attain cognition; he only takes in experience. The problems of spiritual-scientific cognition, its method, its reliability, its true nature – these things do not exist for Prokofieff. Surprisingly enough, in his first book he mentions the „Philosophy of Freedom“. This would indicate that on the „Path to the Book“ he at least read it. But after he has portrayed his states of soul-intoxication and enumerated all the texts of Rudolf Steiner that have called forth such states in him, there is no further word mentioned in his autobiographical essay about the „Philosophy of Freedom“. One can only suppose that it made no „impression“ upon him, left behind no traces in his soul, and did not prompt him to reflection – in short, that it played no part in his spiritual development.

From Prokofieff's reluctance to interest himself in that which flows out of the life in sense-free thinking, there arises the neglect of a further rule, which says: „I am obliged to overcome my aversion to what is known as 'abstract thought'.“

With this rule Rudolf Steiner points to the necessity to develop the faculty of sense-free thinking. As can be seen from his autobiographical essay and his book Prokofieff has made no effort to develop this kind of thinking, or thinking at all. Nor has he undergone any higher training to speak of, which could have fostered the development of thinking; from early childhood he became an Anthroposophist and showed no interest in anything else. But in Anthroposophy itself he neglects the opportunity for a thorough schooling in thought, which a

study of the works of Rudolf Steiner on the theory of knowledge would have meant for him. He has no interest in it. In the last resort thinking could also be trained through a study of other books and lectures of Rudolf Steiner. But these too Prokofieff does not study, but experiences them on a soul level.

The situation is not different where the theme of the Christmas Conference is concerned. He believes it is enough to read three books – even if one has only a fragmentary knowledge of Anthroposophy – in order to understand the central esoteric truth of the Christmas Foundation and explain it to other people. Without making the effort to acquire further knowledge he rests content with the first emotional impressions received while reading, and again finds in it a call personally directed to him:

„Out of this pain (resulting from the indisposition), of which I still felt an after-trace within me, an all the greater (greater than what?) strength had to arise for the struggle to realize the impulse of the Christmas Conference, as the most important spiritual impulse of our time ... And this pain must lead us 'to take up our task with all the greater strength of will' – these words of Marie Steiner (from the Foreword to the proceedings of the Christmas Conference – I.G.) became a kind of leitmotiv for me in my life ...“ („My Path ...“, p. 99; emphasis S.O.P.).

Without satisfying a single requirement made of his esoteric pupils by Rudolf Steiner, Prokofieff receives himself into the ranks of the esoteric pupils and appoints himself as a warrior in the cause of the realization of the Christmas Conference impulses, but in reality for that of his extremely personal, quite specific, more theological than spiritual-scientific interpretation of it, which he presented in his 1st book.

In the following text Prokofieff feels that he is already raised above the ordinary human faculty of judgment, and pretends to be receiving communications regarding the Christmas Conference directly from the spiritual world: „Such an experience of the Christmas Conference“ – he writes – „arising out of its spiritual, one can say esoteric, being, cannot be communicated in an external way with words, or on paper, to those people who have not had this experience; still less (can it be communicated) to those who, as a result of differing human opinions, placed insuperable obstacles in their own path with respect to that which Marie Steiner wanted in reality to say to the Members of the Anthroposophical Society when she decided, not long before her death, to publish all the material

relating to the Christmas Conference. To let speak, not the differing human opinions, but the Christmas Conference itself – this would mean to let it speak not merely out of the shorthand reports and minutes of the meetings, but, with the help of these, to let it speak as a ‘voice from spirit-land’ ... that is addressed to all Anthroposophists ..., and then to receive these voices in complete inner freedom from prejudice and in deep reverence, standing truly in this moment only before the spiritual world and the spiritual powers who lead the Anthroposophical movement“ (ibid., p. 100; how else then?).

This could be true if it were coming from the mouth of someone who had really fulfilled the demands made of the pupil on the Anthroposophical path of development, who had really experienced the meeting with the Guardian of the Threshold, and had been granted leave by him to enter the spiritual world, in order to rise at least to the level of inspirative consciousness. From Prokofieff’s lips, however, all this rhetoric sounds at best like empty phrases. In our circles people often speak in this way, but without at the same time laying claim to the role of esoteric teacher or initiate.

According to his own account Prokofieff did cross the Threshold, but we allow ourselves, in the light of what has been said, not to believe him. But our disbelief is of little consequence to him! He declares that he would have had himself to give a description of Rudolf Steiner’s life from the standpoint of the Christmas Conference, „this means in a certain sense (but in what sense, precisely?) from the standpoint beyond the Threshold ...“ (ibid., p. 103). Through characterizing the Christmas Conference as an event beyond the Threshold and representing the experience of it as something that cannot be expressed outwardly in words, Prokofieff claims for himself the prerogative of explaining its „essential being“; and this he actually proceeded to do, and in this was aided by the thoughtlessness, passivity and credulity of the Anthroposophists. But to move on to the question: In what way did Prokofieff cross the Threshold to the spiritual world? In this connection we recall the warning of Rudolf Steiner in „Occult Science“, where he says: „In the course of a schooling that neglects the development of sureness and firmness of the judgement, and the life of feeling and character, it can occur that the higher world approaches the pupil before he has the necessary inner capacities ... But were the meeting [with the Guardian of the Threshold] to be avoided entirely, and the human being to be led into the supersensible world, then he would be just as little able to come to a knowledge of this world in its true form. For he would be quite incapable of distinguishing

between what he ‘sees into’ the things and what they really are. This distinction is only possible if one perceives one’s own being as an image in its own right and thereby frees the surroundings from all that emanates from one’s inner being. If the human being, without the meeting with the Guardian of the Threshold, were to enter the spiritual and soul world, he could fall from one deception into another ... But as soon as one enters the imaginative world the pictures in it are altered through the influence of such wishes and interest, and one has before one as a seeming reality, something that one has oneself formed, or helped to form“ (GA 13, p. 380-382). Ought we not, from this point of view, to look at the concluding passage of this autobiographical essay, in which Prokofieff speaks of his occult experience, arrived at on a path different from that described by Rudolf Steiner? – „The moment“ – Prokofieff writes – „in which, while I was working on my first book, the true nature of the dodecahedral stone of Love revealed itself to me in real spiritual experience as an imagination of the modern Michaelic Grail, is one of the greatest moments of my life ... Whoever has once seen it [the Grail] in the imaginative form of the Foundation Stone, ceases to have any intellectual doubt with regard to the esoteric significance of the Christmas Conference for our time ...“ („My Path ...“, p. 104; emphasis I.G.).

Thus Anthroposophy helped Prokofieff to clothe his childhood dreams in imaginative form; it was in this way that he forged himself a path from the enthusiastic experience of the musical dramas of R. Wagner to the experiencing of himself as a Grail Knight of the present day – as the new Lohengrin who brought the message from distant Montsalvat to the Kingdom of Brabant. There lies the origin of his wonderful, romantic „Lebenstraum“, which bears no relation to today’s reality, and of which he says at the end of his autobiographical essay: „The founding on Earth of a modern Michael community whose mission it is in our time to become a new brotherhood of the Knights and Guardians of the Holy Grail – this seemed to me to be the principal task of the General Anthroposophical Society on the esoteric plane“ (ibid., p. 104-105). But here is a case, not of understanding, but of a wishful dream which is in need of clarification. For if one wishes to speak in the present day of the tasks of the Anthroposophical Society, and that in connection with the Grail Mysteries, then it is necessary to fulfil a number of extremely difficult conditions: to bring the will into the thinking, to develop the Consciousness-soul, to understand thoroughly the time in which one is living, and to have mastered moral technique. Only when

all this has been accomplished, and not before, can the human being come to objective imaginations, which presuppose the development of the lotus flowers, a heightened control of consciousness, and much more. But even the objective imaginations are, according to Rudolf Steiner, no guarantee of an objective supersensible knowledge. Of the qualities enumerated here, which are absolute requirements on the path of esoteric schooling, Prokofieff possesses, as is clear from his autobiographical essay, not a single one. Rudolf Steiner had to work consciously for their attainment.

Prokofieff's fame rest upon a myth which was able to arise out of the longing of many Anthroposophist for radiant representatives of the „self-revealing“ spirit, and which paralyzes the faculty of discrimination. The triumphal entry of Prokofieff into the Land of the Anthroposophists recalls the story of the Trojan Horse. The „innards“ of the „horse“ disgorged themselves in the form of countless lectures, brochures and thick volumes (produced by the metre), as though from a horn of plenty, into the heads of the Anthroposophists, in their virginal innocence in matters of spiritual knowledge (if they were not virginal the things we have described could not have come about).

In the chapters to follow we will examine what some of these „gifts of the Danaans“ really mean.