

# AN ESOTERIC PROFILE OF MANUEL DE FALLA

Born 23 November 1876 – 14 November 1946



## Methodology

For gathering information I relied primarily on the book by Carol A. Hess: *Sacred Passions, The Life and Music of Manuel de Falla*.

Firstly, I approached the subject from the information which was known and given, that is, looking at Falla's astrological chart. The extent of the astrological patterns to which they showed through his life indicated possible other forces at play. Was he demonstrating characteristic behaviours for specific astrological patterns? If not why not? Taking a broad look at Falla's life in general and his work gave some indications where he stood on the evolutionary journey in relation to consciousness.

Comparing and correlating Falla's astrological patterns to what was known about him as person and his life achievements, I then hypothesized his soul and personality rays.

## BIOGRAPHY

### Social Context

The once mighty Spanish empire was in decline in the late 1880s, its economic prosperity had lapsed into depression and in 1898 the United States declared war against Spain. Spain lost Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. This defeat sparked debate over Spanish identity which would inform political and cultural life for decades. The period between Spain's defeat in the Spanish-American War in 1898 and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 produced the modernist artists such as Lorca, Bunuel, Dali, Miro and Falla. From 1936 until dictator Franco's death in 1975 the lack of freedom and suppression of any opposition did not allow for the cultural ferment to thrive.

## **Manuel de Falla**

Manuel de Falla was a Spanish composer, well known in his country and internationally. His music is still frequently performed today, especially his early music. Falla played part in developing a nationalistic style music thus playing part in the process of forming a Spanish national identity at the time.

His life was complex and contradictory.

Manuel de Falla was born in Cadiz, Spain, on 23 November 1876 into a well off family. His father had a successful shipping business and the stock market enterprise. He was the oldest of five siblings but only two survived into adulthood.

Falla studied piano from an early age, first lessons given by his mother.

He was a sensitive and imaginative child. Initially he favoured literature over music and at the age of twelve he created his own magazines where he could let his imagination fly. He was drawn to theatre and his love of the stage produced later works combining music, vocal, drama and dance performances.

At the age of seventeen Falla decided to dedicate himself to music. He was a very studious and conscientious young man and graduated with the highest honours from Madrid conservatory in 1899. By that time the family fortunes turned and his father's business had failed. This made the whole family dependent on Falla's small earnings from private teaching. In addition, Falla was not a business minded person and lacked confidence in charging the fees for his work.

In 1904 Falla fell in love with his attractive cousin Maria Ledesma. His correspondence revealed poetic images of spiritualized love and passionate longing but his timid nature and weak financial position made him unsuccessful in asking her to marry him. This frustrated romance, mix of timidity and desire, marked Falla profoundly. He even thought about suicide, a mortal sin in the Catholic Church, thus conflicting with his strong religious commitments.

That year Falla composed his first major work, *La Vida Breve*, explicitly Spanish music, evocative of flamenco style. He was drawn to the libretto of unrequited love and the defeat of an innocent heart because it reflected his own romantic frustrations.

At the age of thirty Falla was not financially secure, he had failed in a popular commercial genre (*zarzuela*), had been denied a production of his one opera and he had only limited success as a concert pianist and composer of salon pieces. His main source of income was teaching and accepting whatever playing engagement came his way. Falla's frustration with Madrid musical establishment led him to leave Spain and move to Paris where he studied and worked from 1907 to 1914.

In Paris he quickly established himself in the circle of progressive musicians and composers. Debussy, Paul Dukas, Albeniz, Ravel and Stravinsky were among his friends. In 1908 he completed his first significant piano work *Four Spanish Pieces*. His intention was to express musically the soul and atmosphere of each of the regions in their respective titles: *Aragonesa*, *Cubana*, *Montanesa* and *Andaluza*.

In 1913 the revised *La Vida Breve* was finally performed in Nice and received largely positive reviews. After *La Vida Breve* was performed in Paris, critics hailed Falla as the leader in current Spanish music.

The outbreak of war in 1914 compelled him to return to Spain. In 1915 Falla completed his work *El Amor Brujo*, an opera heavily influenced by flamenco style. His efforts to raise flamenco to the level of art music met with mixed reaction among music critics. *El Amor Brujo* enjoyed some popular success with twenty eight performances and the *Ritual Fire Dance* became the most known and popular piece. Falla's fortunes were improving and so was artistic life in Spain. Madrid enjoyed an international profile as the capital of a neutral state and became a haven for war-weary artists and musicians. Madrid attracted some of the best minds in pre-Civil War Spain, such as Salvador Dali, Luis Bunuel, Federico Carcia Lorca, foreign visitors such as H.G.Wells, Albert Einstein, Marie

Curie, Le Corbusier, Paul Claudel etc. Musical performances by Lorca, Stravinsky, Poulenc, Ravel and Falla were given there.

In 1915 Falla publicly addressed some political issues. He signed a manifesto condemning Spanish neutrality in light of Germany's domination and aggression. This qualified him as a liberal but later, during the Spanish Civil War, his strong religious views isolated him from the liberal camp.

Falla was deeply religious but not conservative. He collaborated with progressive and avant-garde artists. His ballet the Three Cornered Hat, collaborated with Sergei Diaghilev and premiered in 1919, was the most commercially successful work, providing him temporarily with the material comfort that had long eluded him. The ballet was an international success.

Following the deaths of their parents in 1919 Falla and his sister settled in Granada. Living arrangements there provided him with the spiritual and artistic tranquillity he craved.

In Granada Falla met Federico Lorca, young poet and also a good musician. They both were fond of cante jondo, a spontaneous flamenco folk style which they considered as well preserving.

From 1922 Falla was increasingly drawn inwards and he distanced himself from his previous work style, marked by the colourful impressionism of *Nights in the Spanish Garden* or the impassioned andalusimo of *El Amor Brujo* or the colourful orchestration of the *Three Cornered Hat*. A new musical style, the cosmopolitan and universal style of neoclassicism interested him. His new non-andalusian style was international and successful. Falla's objective was to create "pure", objective, universal music. It was a period of time when Spanish arts were enjoying a renaissance, as Lorca, Dali, Miro, Picasso were creating some of their greatest works. From this period comes Falla's Harpsichord concerto and unfinished oratorio *Atlantida*, which is considered to be his highest artistic achievement. The *Atlantida* was completed by Ernesto Halffter, after Falla's death.

From late 1923 the political unrest was gradually intensifying and culminating in eruption of civil war in 1936. Falla's initial sympathies were with the liberals but after a rash of church vandalism occurred he had a change of heart. In Granada the right wing Nationalist death squads killed thousands of citizens suspected of Republican sympathies. Lorca was one of them. Falla approached local authorities intervening on behalf of Lorca but was not successful. He deplored acts of violence and cruelty but at the end, his religious convictions led him to publicly praise the Nationalists for restoring order in the country. At that time he was a well known and respected composer and the Nationalist officials went to a great length to get him to publicly declare his solidarity with the fascist government.

Falla's health was gradually declining. He had a weak constitution, suffered from frequent fits of depression, dizzy spells, haemorrhages, vision problems and difficulty with breathing. He had a nervous breakdown and his lung collapsed in 1938.

With the decline of health went also decline in his creative powers. His major work, oratorio *Atlantida*, remained unfinished.

In April 1939 the Civil War ended with the total defeat of the Republic and the left.

In October 1939 Falla went to Argentina, following an invitation to conduct his works in Buenos Aires. He stayed there and never returned to Spain.

Falla died on 14 November 1946, in Alta Gracia, Granada, Argentina. In January 1947 his body was returned to Spain and buried in the crypt of the Cadiz cathedral.

## FALLA'S WORKS



Falla's early works are very different to those he composed in his later years. He moved from the familiar, Andalusian crowd pleasers, full of passion, drama and sensuality to modernist music.

Whatever he worked on, he was pursuing perfection. His creative process was long and he agonized over every note, to the frustration of his co-workers.

The early compositions were inspired by poetic accounts of love's turmoils, as depicted in *La Vida Breve* and *El Amor Brujo*. For these works Falla chose flamenco style with strong rhythms to express powerful images of death, timelessness, nature, passion. His intention was to raise flamenco, a nation's folk genre, to an art music.

Falla in his music displayed a wide range of interests and styles. In composing incidental music, he blended modern, traditional and popular elements.

The most paradoxical aspect of Falla the composer is that as much as he struggled with indecision, he slipped from one style to another with ease.

Later in his creative years Falla moved away from folkloristic trend to universal music. In the new neo-classical style he found his true self as a composer. His prudishness and Catholicism are associated with his late style in works such as the Harpsichord Concerto and unfinished oratorio *Atlántida*. The subject of *Atlántida* he approached from a religious angle, the submerging old continent leading to a rise of Spain and Christianity.

Falla placed great importance on integrity, purity and authenticity of music. He guided his students to find their own way and did not wish to be emulated.



# MANUEL DE FALLA'S RAY CHART

## Hypothetical Ray Chart

Soul	Ray 6
Personality	Ray 4
Mental body	Ray 4
Astral body	Ray 2
Physical body	Ray 7

## Soul – Ray 6

Falla saw God above all things. He was deeply religious and sincere in his faith and his faith guided and inspired him throughout his life. He followed the Catholic church but his faith went deeper than that of an average church goer. In his young years he sought guidance from the priest Fedriani who advised him on spiritual, personal and art matters.

Falla was aware about the church's failings to live up to its teachings but still held up high its ideal to which he aspired. He had a reputation as an ascetic. Every year he took a retreat in a little village in Andalusia, not speaking to anyone for ten or twelve days, preparing for work.

He sought to realize in his music spiritual qualities such as purity, absence of vanity and spiritual aspiration.

Falla professed total allegiance to the Roman Catholic belief system. On walks he would enter the first church he encountered to perform his devotions and at mass he paid fervent attention. He was fearful of being a failure in the eyes of God and lived by a rigid moral code.

## Personality – Ray 4

Falla life is considered to be full of contradictions, in his personal life and his work.

His early music is evocative of strong emotions and drama, sensuality and drive. As a composer, he put into his music his soul and feelings. In his later years he distanced himself from passionate and dramatic music of his youth and he feared that this kind of music was a sin and could have bad influence on people.

According to Falla's contemporaries he seemed to be a bundle of contradictions. According to Stravinsky, Falla was incapable of making jokes. Yet, he appreciated a good joke, even if it was on him. He lived as a monk like ascetic yet wrote some highly sensual music. He claimed to shun publicity yet expressed his convictions in print, sometimes at considerable personal cost. He agonized over simple decisions such as which shirt to put on in the morning, yet he stood firm in his Roman Catholic faith which he considered to be the one true religion. He was a liberal during the World War I but at the end supported the Right in the Spanish Civil War.

He was often portrayed as a humourless ascetic, yet, when young, friends gathered in his house Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons, all of them high spirited young people. They talked, argued, drank beer, sang and played the piano with such enthusiasm that the floor vibrated.

Inner torment accompanied him throughout his life, he agonized over every decision and detail. His close friends commented on his fussiness and obsession with sin, on customary torment and unnecessary fretting. He worried over a simple word, for fear of being misinterpreted. He anguished over a salutation, a handshake.



## **Mental body – Ray 4**

Falla was known for his indecisiveness and doubting himself.

He was fond of intellectual company and ideas. He made always efforts to stay in the forefront of musical developments but did not blindly followed trends set by others. He corresponded widely with many personalities of cultural life.

His mental body was also influenced by Ray 5 through his sun sign Sagittarius. On the negative side, Falla paid overdue attention to details, to the point of being obsessive. He had strong opinions and his fear of being misrepresented sometimes verged on maniacal.

In later years he realized his desire for order in almost mathematical orchestration of his works. In music he valued authenticity.

## **Astral body - Ray 2**

Falla was very timid, shy and in his later years was withdrawn, craving silence and gentle pace in life.

He lived modestly. There was no drama in Falla's life and he preferred to be rather in the background than being a centre of attention. Modesty and kindness stand out in his communication with people.

According to his contemporaries, he remained to be gentle, modest and unassuming, despite of his international success. He was generous with time and care he gave to his students. He was concerned for their personal welfare and went out of his way for them. He was encouraging his students to develop their own style.

He took great pain not to offend anyone.

## **Physical Body – Ray 7**

The ray of a physical body conditions also how the brain functions.

Falla was a perfectionist and often agonized over every detail in all matters, in his personal and professional life. Falla composed with precision.

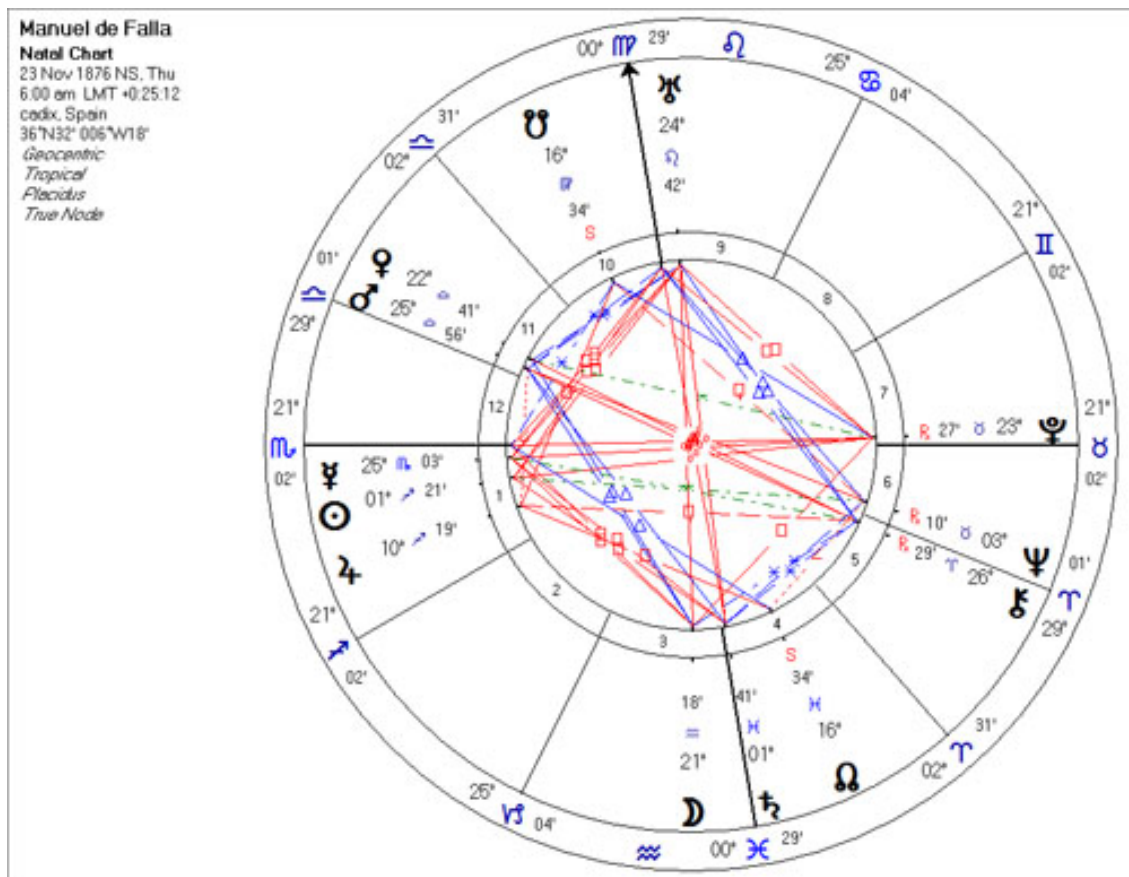
His search for perfection, coupled with his indecisiveness, led to stalling and slowing down of his working process and led to several break-downs in his collaborative relationships. It also held back signing of contracts and the business side of Falla's work. His time-consuming struggle over every note was becoming progressively worse with time.

Falla took care about his appearance and was always well dressed.

One close friend recalled that Falla was not a morning person, was incredibly slow at dressing, doing his toilette routine and with his weightlifting routine. He was scrupulous, bordering on obsessive-compulsive (e.g. counting the strokes of his toothbrush). He hoarded old things, saved everything from bus tickers to reviews of his music and was obsessed with germs and hygiene.



## MANUEL DE FALLA'S ASTROLOGY



### Ascendant in Scorpio, transmits Ray 4

The ascendant sign represents soul level and it indicates the intended life or soul purpose for this incarnation. It presents the force which will lead the man to success.

Exoteric rulers are Pluto Ray 1 and Mars Ray 6

Exoteric keynote is "Let Maya flourish and let deception rule".

Esoteric ruler is Mars Ray 6

Esoteric keynote is Warrior am I and from the battle I emerge triumphant.

Scorpio's purpose is to test and eventually to triumph over any negative traits in the personality, to overcome the conflict of duality, desire and illusion. Scorpio negative traits are jealousy, secretiveness, resentfulness, controlling or manipulating, moodiness.

Positive traits to cultivate are determination, fearlessness, loyalty, ambition and intuition. There were certainly more positive traits of this sign which Falla expressed. He was perhaps controlling and moody but the extent of his work and his influence were the result of his determination, ambition and intuition.

### Transforming personality traits of the ascendant into soul qualities

The rulers of the ascendant are also rulers of the whole chart, meaning, their influence will be very influential in the life. In this case it is Pluto and Mars.

*Exoteric ruler Pluto is in Taurus in the seventh house.*

This indicates that work needs to be done in the sphere of relationships and partners. Our close relationships, people we are bonded to, reveal our inner complexes. On the soul level, this house

indicates personality and soul fusion. Pluto digs deep to reveal what needs to be destroyed, so that personal relationships are less selfish and more inclusive.

Falla avoided entering into close relationships. He preferred emotional convenience of sharing household with his sister who also remained unmarried and who ran the household and was his personal secretary. From what is known about his personal life, he buried himself into work or complained about his health or ran into a nearest church when his inner demons were raising their heads. One can speculate that because of the catholic influence, he did not face his personal dilemmas and considered such undertaking as a selfish self-absorption. Or, it is possible that he managed very successfully raise energies from his lower chakras into the throat centre and use that centre to express his creativity. But his early music is a testimony that he was able to feel strong emotions and understood them well.

*The esoteric ruler of Scorpio is Mars and is in Libra in the eleventh house.*

The esoteric ruler of the Ascendant Sign is the primary symbol for the purpose of the soul. This house is about group activities and affiliations and spiritual vision and aspirations. With the esoteric ruler in the eleventh house, Falla's soul purpose was to become more group or soul conscious, and follow his higher vision.

In Spain, Falla is considered the most innovative composer of the first half of the twentieth century. He was the most influential in the process of finding the Spanish musical identity. Falla associated with leading personalities of music and art world and played a pivotal role in the Spanish cultural renaissance before the Civil War.

Despite his desire for more quiet life and seclusion, he never completely disappeared from the public gaze. His correspondence was vast and prolific. He insisted of being apolitical but his status as an important public figure did not allow him to stand aside. The fascist regime claimed his alliance during the Civil War. Falla was devastated by the violence and cruelty during the war. He was a peaceful man yearning for harmony. It is likely that Falla was working out some part of his national history. Spain has Ray 6 as its soul ray and it is a religious country, as Falla was.

### **Sun in Sagittarius, in the first house**

The Sun sign represents the conscious, self-aware level, the integrating personality. Its placement in the first house indicates that in one respect or another, Falla would shine in this life.

*Sagittarius transmits Ray 4, 5, 6*

Ray 4 forces the disciple to fight for his spiritual life. Ray 5 gives a keen and focused intellect and detached objectivity. Ray 6 provides the devotion and aspiration which drives the disciple higher. On the unregenerated personality level, Ray 4 leads to instability, Ray 5 gives a cold detachment, and Ray 6 a powerful desire to pursue the goals of the personality.

Exoteric ruler is Jupiter Ray 2 and is in the first house.

Exoteric keynote is "Let food be sought..

Sagittarius' higher purpose is to develop a one-pointed mind and re-orient to a higher spiritual goal. Positive Sagittarius traits to develop are focused direction, vision, devotion to the highest ideal. Negative traits to overcome are carelessness, tactlessness, superficiality, inconsistency and over-confidentiality and fixed ideas.

Falla displayed in his life the positive traits of this sign such as intellectual astuteness, generosity and to a large extent the ability to be adventurous and optimistic. Despite being financially insecure, he twice moved to foreign countries to live and work which requires personal courage. This "courage" indicates that his Scorpio ascendant sign was being effective.. He strived to express his highest ideals through his music. He was respected for his work and considered to be a leading composer of his time. His works achieved polished precision and he inspired other composers to follow.



However, in his focus on ideals he sometimes omitted to look at the realities in front of him. In respect of the Ray 4, apart of exhibiting appreciation of harmony and beauty in the arts and nature, Falla exhibited indecisiveness, inner torment, frustration and moodiness. This ray features strongly in his life because his personality and his mental body were very likely on this ray.

*Esoteric ruler of Sagittarius, the Earth, is in the sign of Gemini.*

The Earth transmits Ray 3. It has an individual effect on people who are on the Path, as Falla was. Earth in Gemini helps one to think intelligently before reacting, to communicate with simplicity and consideration, to ground ideas into matter.

Falla took great care in the way he communicated. He considered every word, and note, taking care not to be misunderstood and going to great length not to offend anyone. It is said that Falla had a less than imposing podium presence, which could be contributed to him being focused more mentally when he was working and not connecting emotionally with people around.

### **Moon in Aquarius in the third house**

The Moon indicates the past and those patterns which hinder further expansion of consciousness. It is considered to represent the prison of the soul. Its placement in the 3<sup>rd</sup> house means that Falla had deep seated communication issues.

Exoteric ruler of Aquarius is Saturn Ray 3 and Uranus Ray 7

Exoteric keynote is "Let desire in form be the rule"

Aquarius transmits Ray 5. The personality on the lower level is "all things to all men", it makes connections with many, and gives the appearance that it has concern for the whole but its motives are selfish. Its desire revolves around the thought life and the acquisition of knowledge and intellectual property. It wants to be recognized as being special and superior. It often lacks ability to bring ideas to fruition on the physical plane. Living in mental isolation, individualistic and fixed minded, it likes to force its views on others.

*Saturn squares a stellium in the first house: Sun-Mercury-Jupiter*

A stellium is three or more planets all clustered in a sign or house. They intensify certain traits in the nature for good or ill, depending upon the signs, houses or aspects involved.

A stellium in the first house promotes a need for finding one's true identity, but on the negative side, can lead to an acute self-absorption. All three are squared by Saturn, which sapped self-confidence and added a morose outlook to life. Falla felt that he always had to explain and justify himself – indicating a lack of self-confidence.

Saturn in the chart indicates one's karmic inheritance and potential crises in the life. Falla's Saturn is in the fourth house, indicating karma arising in the family and home, one's roots and traditions. As a child he lived in a comfortable and supportive environment so it is likely that the karmic ties would be in relations to his cultural heritage and conditioning. His soul wanted him to rise above this inherited pattern.

Falla displayed some of the weaknesses of Aquarius. He lived in his head and avoided close relationships. He was kind to everyone but lacked self-confidence. Despite his hard work and recognition, he never secured sound financial position for himself and this was largely because of the mixture of his preoccupation with detail, dislike of the commercialization of art and lack of attention to practical matters. He lived his life according to set routines and kept certain daily rituals, obsessing about details. Later in his life he preferred seclusion and detachment from social life.

Esoteric ruler of Aquarius is Jupiter Ray 2, in Sagittarius in the first house

Esoteric keynote is Water of life am I, poured forth for thirsty men.

Falla's soul wanted him to expand his consciousness, to open his heart and be more inclusive in spirit; to dedicate himself to the service of humanity.

Sensitivity and kindness were highly visible characteristics of Falla's personality. He was very devotional in his faith and held God as the highest ideal. He was aware about the church's failings but could not dissociate himself from the church structure and liberate his faith. It is possible that there was some karmic residue in Falla's life in relation to the church and its role in Spain. The period of Spanish inquisition in history is well known and even today Spain remains to be a deeply catholic country.

The Ray 5 of Aquarius indicates the importance of perfecting the lower mind so that it becomes an illumined instrument of the soul. This ray gives the ability to find and apply the knowledge that will enable the various transitions in consciousness to occur.

Composing music is a complex process and it involves the use of abstract and concrete mind. Falla pursued perfection and he realized it his many works, thus enabling his own consciousness, and consciousness of others, to expand.

## CONCLUSION

Manuel de Falla was a well known and influential personality and composer. His life was complex and contradictory but his music has a universal language and speaks to people internationally. He was a deeply religious man and held the vision of God above all. He believed in ultimate liberty – freedom to act upon the dictates of the conscience - which came only from total obedience to God. In this he was aligning himself with the will of God.

Falla exhibited the qualities of his sun sign Sagittarius and also his ascendant sign Scorpio, mainly the Rays 4, 5 and 7.

Based on the information about his life and work, it is possible that Falla was a disciple, quite likely the first initiate and working to towards his second initiation.

Striving to fulfil the will of God, not to fail in the eyes of God, was the overriding aspiration of Falla. This suggests the Ray 6 Soul.

His astrological chart indicates that he needed to find his own identity and express it, as indicated by the stellium in the first house which included the Sun in Sagittarius – his personality. The energies of Sagittarius were helping Falla develop the lower mind and support the mental focus on a higher level. They encouraged him to direct his life into a new and higher direction, perhaps to look at his faith and discriminate between the church and the inner faith.

The Scorpio ascendant, the primary soul purpose, points to the need to deal with the old patterns which stand in the way to further expansion of consciousness. Falla may not have cleared all these completely – his prudish approach to life and anxiety of not committing a sin remained unresolved, with the question of Faith, God and Church unexamined.

Throughout his life he struggled and agonized but lived with integrity. His life of a life of a disciple.



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