

The Fall



The fall is a time of cozy contemplation for some, a sad time for others. No longer the far flung ecstasy of summer and preceding the hibernation period of winter (here in the Northern hemisphere at least!), it's a time of slowing down to reflect. It's no wonder the fall is called The Spring of the Philosopher: this season confronts us with what we've cultivated within.

The ancients of many traditions honored this sacred time by taking autumn's rich external symbolism as a tool for inner rebirth. Nature follows cycles, as do we, and the cycle of life and death - the harvest and the falling of leaves - mimics the metamorphosis we go through many times in life. In this way the fall evokes a deeper sense of what it means to be human.

While we may be content to stay where we are, we are continually pushed to reinvent ourselves.

On a recent trip, I saw some of these themes play out over the frescoes of the fallen city of Pompeii. The perfectly preserved paintings in the Villa of Mysteries tells the story of us all through the trials of a young initiate. In the life-size murals I saw a young woman make many choices: to take on a life of service to the temple, sacrificing the wants of her material self to a cause that serves the greater good. In another scene she chooses to conquer her fear and embrace the unknown. Ultimately, she chooses growth despite pain and difficulty. The final painting in the series is shown above. No longer the young girl of the first panel, the woman looks out at the audience confidently, as if she's asking us: *what are you willing to overcome in yourself in order to change?* Somehow I got the sense that this woman would lead others toward the path to their best self.

The philosopher or 'lover of wisdom' in all of us wants to know that we're here for a purpose. We want to understand: why do I do the things I do? Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? When we seek the answers to these questions earnestly, we feel ourselves moving in the direction of our destiny.

Just as seeds need time, care and depth within the soil to bear fruit, we need patience, perseverance and reflection at a deeper level to grow - even when the results aren't immediately evident. Simply put, we need philosophy: we need a love of and appreciation for wisdom that awakens the best in us. From that place of strength, we can have a greater impact



on the world. What greater gift can we give the world other than our yet undiscovered self?