



Journal Contemplation: A Larger Tapestry

CONTEMPLATION: A LARGER TAPESTRY



★★ Sicily represents, for me, the way our lives are interconnected, woven into the fabric of a larger tapestry that extends beyond our individual lives. We get carried away in our busyness and the daily concerns of life, and sometimes we think that's the whole picture. It's not! There is something much bigger going on... We can zoom out and see our separate, individual lives from a wider perspective.

At the end of the 19th century, Sicily was in a time of tumultuous change. A number of conditions came together to create great hardship for those working on the land. The decline of feudalism and the recent unification of Italy brought new land reforms, taxation, and trade policies that detrimentally affected the former peasant classes seeking to acquire land and grow crops. A trade war with France decimated the market for Sicilian grains, leaving nearly all but the wealthy landowners in poverty. The result was a mass exodus from Sicily, mostly to North and South America.



These are some of the conditions that brought my own life into being, writing this as an American today. Our lives are inextricably entwined with the larger forces of human struggle, change, and history. We cannot control the circumstances that give rise to our own life, but through them we can see the nature of things - the way the circumstances of one moment in time give rise to what comes next. I have no particular interest in global trade policies of the late 1800's, but they have undeniably shaped the contours of my life.

We can also see that in each moment we are weaving the fabric of conditions that will give rise to what comes next. What we choose to say or do; how we choose to dedicate our finite time and energy in the world - these are the threads we weave into that larger tapestry. This is a source of great agency we have to shape our own lives, the lives of those around us, and our collective human destiny. We cannot control the outcome - for the threads are infinite, but our individual and collective lives will bear an imprint on the warp and weft of the larger tapestry that unfolds.



JOURNALING

Think about your own place in the larger human tapestry:

- *What are some of the global, cultural, or historical forces that contributed to the contours of your life?*
- *What are some of the familial or environmental circumstances outside of your control that have shaped who you are today?*
- *In what way have you contributed to circumstances that have shaped or influenced the lives of those around you, your community, or some part of the larger society?*
- *In what way do the things to which you dedicate yourself - your passions, interests, your work in the world - connect you to those in other places or times?*

Try mapping your connections to the larger tapestry visually on the page - mapping both those circumstances that have shaped your life, and those circumstances you have contributed to, which have or may continue to shape your life and the lives of others.