

On Patterns & Entanglements



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Apophenia (coined by Klaus Conrad in 1958), and more recently Patternicity (coined by Michael Shermer in 2008), are defined as the inclination to find patterns in seemingly unrelated information, object, or things as illustrated in the top image. In an article in *Scientific American*, Shermer argues that while some scientists dismiss patternicity as an error in cognition, he believes that:

Our brains are belief engines: evolved pattern-recognition machines that connect dots and create meaning out of the patterns that we think we see in nature. (Shermer 2008)

Upon reading the excerpt from *Patterned Ground*, I kept thinking that patternicity helps to explain the need of historical figures like John Dee to decipher and order *the true nature of things*. (Harrison 2004: 21) I did find it amusing that many of these figures began this work on the basis of Divine Creation. Religion's impact on science, or rather its hindrance of progress, is widely seen throughout history. I could argue that in this single instance, belief

in a higher power prompted a desire to “decipher God’s playbook” and led to the scientific grounding and the entanglements of their findings.

Entanglements is a term being woven throughout all of my classes in these early weeks. In a very “meta” way I am employing patternicity to find commonalities in seemingly different fields of design – or at least areas over overlap. Our “treasure hunt” workshop this week began with a sheet of different animate and inanimate items, but what I found most interesting was that many of these items could be connected when the classification was defined in a broader way. For example, an image I took of a pub satisfied the requirement of a pub. But because of the location in which I took the picture, I was able to identify, an island, radio, viruses, boundaries, and more if I diffused the definition of the categories.



Entanglement Treasure Hunt by LeNoir

Finally, I think it would be simple to take these ideas of order and classification into the modern age and wonder why then are so many people unconvinced of our connections and entanglements with nature. I find the notion of entanglements

comforting and connected to empathy which I believe is crucial in changing behaviours. It would seem that an understanding of how we and nature are intertwined would cause a person to see from a perspective outside of their own. However as Harrison states, pattern recognition is a long way from explanation (Harrison 2004: 31) and paraphrasing Mead, the order we place upon the world may not be the way the world is ordered. (Harrison 2004: 27) I am beginning to see the role of a designer, at a base level, is to interpret/explain connections and entanglements in order to foster consensus action to address modern problems.

Harrison, S. (Stephan), Steve Pile, and N. J. Thrift, eds. 2004. *Patterned Ground : Entanglements of Nature and Culture*. London: Reaktion Books.

Shermer, M. (2008). *Patternicity: Finding Meaningful Patterns in Meaningless Noise*. [online] Scientific American . Available at:
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/patternicity-finding-meaningful-patterns/> [Accessed 6 Oct. 2023].

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