

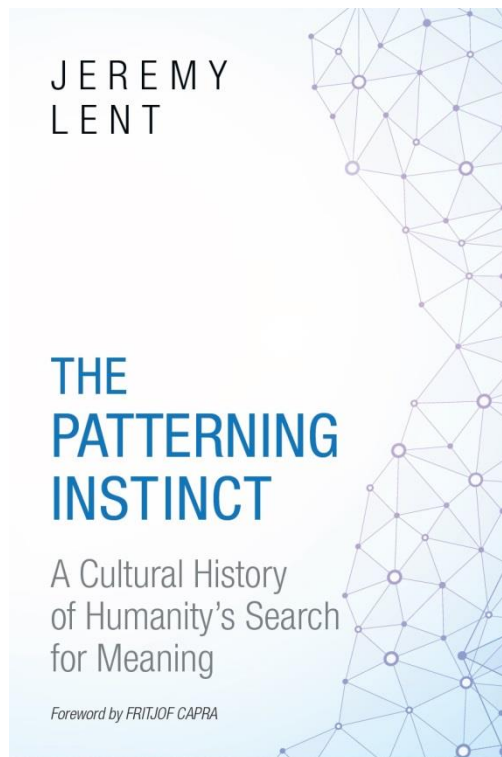
book review by john varney

The Patterning Instinct

- A cultural history of humanity's search for meaning

Jeremy Lent

published 2017 by Prometheus Books



This big thick history book surprised me by being so engaging I didn't want to put it down. It covers the whole history of human civilisation from the beginning of time until the present and then to somewhere in the uncertain future. In this journey we are enthralled, entertained, appalled and enchanted in turn. Filled with fascinating detail and challenging ideas the book is a romp through what has given meaning to life in different parts of the world at different times.

It culminates with a glimpse of a potentially cataclysmic future – or alternatively one in which humanity might just possibly avert disaster and make a better world.

The first three quarters of the book provide a commanding perspective through a well researched and broad perspective of the major cultures that have existed around the world through the ages. In the last quarter we use this perspective to view our own western civilisation that currently dominates the world and seems to be leading us to disaster of one sort or another. In the closing chapters we look at alternative possibilities that might avert the worst aspects of such disasters and lead to the founding of a different and more harmonious kind of civilisation.

The index, notes and further reading suggested, serve not only to support Lent's scholarship but also to nudge the reader towards going more deeply into the arguments and, hopefully, coming to similar conclusions that might just result in collective action to save us from the worst excesses of modernity.

I strongly recommend this book to everyone – whether or not you are in a leadership or management role, you are surely a responsible citizen of humanity. Read this and think! It will surely influence your own world and thereby change, and maybe even save, the world we share.