Clean Code

（评注版）

[美] **Robert C. Martin**　著

韩磊 评注

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Robert C. Martin Series

Clean Code
A Handbook of Agile Software Craftsmanship

Foreword by James O. Coplien　　　Robert C. Martin
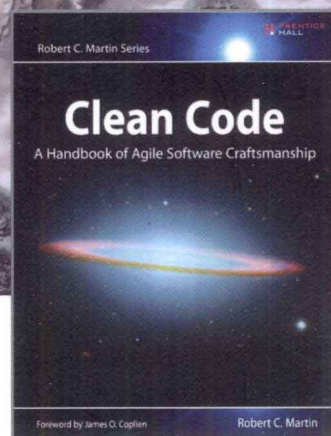
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内 容 简 介

软件质量，不但依赖架构及项目管理，而且与代码质量紧密相关。这一点，无论是敏捷开发流派还是传统开发流派，都不得不承认。本书提出一种观念：代码质量与其整洁度成正比。干净的代码，既在质量上较为可靠，也为后期维护、升级奠定了良好的基础。本书作者给出了一系列行之有效的整洁代码操作实践。这些实践在本书中体现为一条条规则（或称"启示"），并辅以来自现实项目的正、反两方面的范例。只要遵循这些规则，就能写出干净的代码，从而有效提升代码的质量

本书适合致力于改善代码质量的程序员及技术经理阅读。本书介绍的规则均来自作者多年的实践经验，涵盖从命名到重构的多个方面，虽为一"家"之言，然诚有借鉴意义。

本书是 *Clean Code* 一书的评注版，力邀国内资深专家执笔，在英文原著的基础上增加了中文点评和注释，旨在融合二者之长，既保留经典的原创文字与味道，又以先行者的学研心得与实践感悟，对读者的阅读和学习加以点拨，指明捷径。

悦读上品　得乎益友

孔子云："取乎其上，得乎其中；取乎其中，得乎其下；取乎其下，则无所得矣"。

对于读书求知而言，这句古训教我们去读好书，最好是好书中的上品——经典书。其中，科技人员要读的技术书，因为直接关乎客观是非与生产效率，阅读选材本更应慎重。然而，随着技术图书品种的日益丰富，发现经典书越来越难，尤其对于涉世尚浅的新读者，更为不易，而他们又往往是最需要阅读、提升的重要群体。

所谓经典书，或说上品，是指选材精良、内容精练、讲述生动、外延丰盈、表现手法体贴入微的读品，它们会成为读者的知识和经验库中的重要组成部分，并且拥有从不断重读中汲取养分的空间。因此，选择阅读上品的问题便成了有效阅读的首要问题。当然，这不只是效率问题，上品促成的既是对某一种技术、思想的真正理解和掌握，同时又是一种感悟或享受，是一种愉悦。

与技术本身类似，经典 IT 技术书多来自国外。深厚的积累、良好的写作氛围，使一批大师为全球技术学习者留下了璀璨的智慧瑰宝。就在那个年代即将远去之时，无须回眸，也能感受到这一部部厚重而深邃的经典著作，在造福无数读者后从未蒙尘的熠熠光辉。而这些凝结众多当今国内技术中坚美妙记忆与绝佳体验的技术图书，虽然尚在国外图书市场上大放异彩，却已逐渐淡出国人的视线。最为遗憾的是，迟迟未有可以填补空缺的新书问世。而无可替代，不正是经典书被奉为圭臬的原因？

为了不让国内读者，尤其是即将步入技术生涯的新一代读者，就此错失这些滋养过先行者们的好书，以出版 IT 精品图书，满足技术人群需求为己任的我们，愿意承担这一使命。本次机遇惠顾了我们，让我们有机会携手权威的 Pearson 公司，精心推出"传世经典书丛"。

在我们眼中，"传世经典"的价值首先在于——既适合喜爱科技图书的读者，也符合专家们挑剔的标准。幸运的是，我们的确找到了这些堪称上品的佳作。丛书带给我们的幸运颇多，细数一下吧。

得以引荐大师著作

有恐思虑不周，我们大量参考了国外权威机构和网站的评选结果，并得到了 Pearson 的专业支持，又进

一步对符合标准之图书的国内外口碑与销售情况进行细致分析，也听取了国内技术专家的宝贵建议，才有幸选出对国内读者最富有技术养分的大师上品。

向深邃的技术内涵致敬

中外技术环境存在差异，很多享誉国外的好书未必适用于国内读者；且技术与应用瞬息万变，很容易让人心生迷惘或疲于奔命。本丛书的图书遴选，注重打好思考方法与技术理念的根基，旨在帮助读者修炼内功，提升境界，将技术真正融入个人知识体系，从而可以一通百通，从容面对随时涌现的技术变化。

翻译与评注的双项选择

引进优秀外版著作，将其翻译为中文供国内读者阅读，较为有效与常见。但另有一些外语水平较高、喜好阅读原版的读者，苦于对技术理解不足，不能充分体会原文表述的精妙，需要有人指导与点拨。而一批本土技术精英经过长期经典熏陶及实践锤炼，已足以胜任这一工作。有鉴于此，本丛书在翻译版的同时推出融合英文原著与中文点评、注释的评注版，供不同志趣的读者自由选择。

承蒙国内一流译（注）者的扶持

优秀的英文原著最终转化为真正的上品，尚需跨越翻译鸿沟，外版图书的翻译质量一直屡遭国内读者诟病。评注版的增值与含金量，同样依赖于评注者的高卓才具。好在，本丛书得到了久经考验的权威译（注）者的认可和支持，首肯我们选用其佳作，或亲自参与评注工作。正是他们的参与保证了经典的品质，既再次为我们的选材把关，更提供了一流的中文表述。

期望带给读者良好的阅读体验

一本好书带给人的愉悦不止于知识收获，良好的阅读感受同样不可缺少，且对学业不无助益。为让读者收获与上品相称的体验，我们在图书装帧设计与选材用料上同样不敢轻率，惟愿送到读者手中的除了珠玑章句，还有舒适与熨帖的视觉感受。

所有参与丛书出版的人员，尽管能力有限，却无不心怀严谨之心与完美愿望。如果读者朋友能从潜心阅读这些上品中偶有获益，不啻为对我们工作的最佳褒奖。若有阅读感悟，敬请拨冗告知，以鼓励我们继续在这一道路上贡献绵薄之力。如有不周之处，也请不吝指教。

评注者序

代码猴子与童子军军规

2007 年 3 月，我在 SD West 2007 技术大会上聆听了 Robert C. Martin（鲍勃大叔）的主题演讲 *Craftsmanship and the Problem of Productivity: Secrets for Going Fast without Making a Mess*。一身休闲打扮的鲍勃大叔，以一曲嘲笑低水平编码者的 Code Monkey（代码猴子）开场。

是的，我们就是一群代码猴子，上蹿下跳，自以为领略了编程的真谛。可惜，当我们抓着几个酸桃子，得意洋洋坐到树枝上时，却对自己造成的混乱熟视无睹。那堆"可以运行"的乱麻程序，就在我们的眼皮底下慢慢腐坏。

从听到那场以 TDD 为主题的演讲之后，我就一直关注鲍勃大叔，还有他在 TDD 和整洁代码方面的言论。

这本书名为 *Clean Code*，乃 Object Mentor（鲍勃大叔开办的技术咨询和培训公司）一干大牛在编程方面的经验累积。按鲍勃大叔的话来说，就是"Object Mentor 整洁代码派"的说明。

正如 Coplien 在序中所言，宏大建筑中最细小的部分，如关不紧的门、有点儿没铺平的地板，甚至是凌乱的桌面，都会将整个大局的魅力毁灭殆尽——这就是整洁代码之所系。Coplien 列举了许多谚语以证明整洁的价值，中国也有"修身、齐家、治国、平天下"之语。整洁代码的重要性毋庸置疑，问题是如何写出真正整洁的代码。

本书既是整洁代码的定义，亦是如何写出整洁代码的指南。鲍勃大叔认为，"写整洁的代码，需要遵循大量的小技巧，贯彻刻苦习得的'整洁感'。这种'代码感'就是关键所在……它不仅让我们看到代码的优劣，还予我们以借戒规之力化劣为优的攻略。"作者阐述了在命名、函数、注释、代码格式、对象和数据结构、错误处理、边界问题、单元测试、类、系统、并发编程等方面如何做到整洁的经验与最佳实践。长期遵照这些经验编写代码，所谓"代码感"也就自然而然滋生出来。更有价值的部分是

鲍勃大叔本人对 3 个 Java 项目的剖析与改进过程的实操记录。通过多达 3 章的重构记录，鲍勃大叔充分地证明了童子军军规在编程领域同样适用：离开时要比发现时更整洁。为了向读者呈现代码的原始状态，我对这部分代码及本书其他部分的绝大多数代码注释都不做评注。如果读者有任何疑问，可通过邮件与我沟通（cleancode.cn@gmail.com）。

接触开发技术 10 多年以来，特别是从事 IT 技术媒体工作 6 年以来，我见过许多对于代码整洁性缺乏足够重视的开发者。不过分地说，这是职业素养与基本功的双重缺陷。为本书做评注，实在也是因为希望在这方面看到开发者的重视度和实际应用能力的提升。

在本书的结束语中，鲍勃大叔提到别人给他的一条腕带，上面的字样是"Test Obsessed"（沉迷测试）。鲍勃大叔"发现自己无法取下腕带。不仅是因为腕带很紧，而且那也是条精神上的紧箍咒……它一直提醒我，我做了写出整洁代码的承诺。"有了这条腕带，代码猴子成了模范童子军。我想，每位开发者都需要这样一条腕带吧！

韩磊

Foreword

One of our favorite candies here in Denmark is Ga-Jol, whose strong licorice vapors are a perfect complement to our damp and often chilly weather. Part of the charm of Ga-Jol to us Danes is the wise or witty sayings printed on the flap of every box top. I bought a two-pack of the delicacy this morning and found that it bore this old Danish saw:

> *Ærlighed i små ting er ikke nogen lille ting.*

"Honesty in small things is not a small thing." It was a good omen consistent with what I already wanted to say here. Small things matter. This is a book about humble concerns whose value is nonetheless far from small.

God is in the details, said the architect Ludwig mies van der Rohe. This quote recalls contemporary arguments about the role of architecture in software development, and particularly in the Agile world. Bob and I occasionally find ourselves passionately engaged in this dialogue. And yes, mies van der Rohe was attentive to utility and to the timeless forms of building that underlie great architecture. On the other hand, he also personally selected every doorknob for every house he designed. Why? Because small things matter.

In our ongoing "debate" on TDD, Bob and I have discovered that we agree that software architecture has an important place in development, though we likely have different visions of exactly what that means. Such quibbles are relatively unimportant, however, because we can accept for granted that responsible professionals give *some* time to thinking and planning at the outset of a project. The late-1990s notions of design driven *only* by the tests and the code are long gone. Yet attentiveness to detail is an even more critical foundation of professionalism than is any grand vision. First, it is through practice in the small that professionals gain proficiency and trust for practice in the large. Second, the smallest bit of sloppy construction, of the door that does not close tightly or the slightly crooked tile on the floor, or even the messy desk, completely dispels the charm of the larger whole. That is what clean code is about.

Still, architecture is just one metaphor for software development, and in particular for that part of software that delivers the initial *product* in the same sense that an architect delivers a pristine building. In these days of Scrum and Agile, the focus is on quickly bringing *product* to market. We want the factory running at top speed to produce software. These are human factories: thinking, feeling coders who are working from a product back-

log or user story to create *product*. The manufacturing metaphor looms ever strong in such thinking. The production aspects of Japanese auto manufacturing, of an assembly-line world, inspire much of Scrum.

Yet even in the auto industry, the bulk of the work lies not in manufacturing but in maintenance—or its avoidance. In software, 80% or more of what we do is quaintly called "maintenance": the act of repair. Rather than embracing the typical Western focus on *producing* good software, we should be thinking more like home repairmen in the building industry, or auto mechanics in the automotive field. What does Japanese management have to say about *that*?

In about 1951, a quality approach called Total Productive Maintenance (TPM) came on the Japanese scene. Its focus is on maintenance rather than on production. One of the major pillars of TPM is the set of so-called 5S principles. 5S is a set of disciplines—and here I use the term "discipline" instructively. These 5S principles are in fact at the foundations of Lean—another buzzword on the Western scene, and an increasingly prominent buzzword in software circles. These principles are not an option. As Uncle Bob relates in his front matter, good software practice requires such discipline: focus, presence of mind, and thinking. It is not always just about doing, about pushing the factory equipment to produce at the optimal velocity. The 5S philosophy comprises these concepts:

- *Seiri*, or organization (think "sort" in English). Knowing where things are—using approaches such as suitable naming—is crucial. You think naming identifiers isn't important? Read on in the following chapters.

- *Seiton*, or tidiness (think "systematize" in English). There is an old American saying: *A place for everything, and everything in its place.* A piece of code should be where you expect to find it—and, if not, you should re-factor to get it there.

- *Seiso*, or cleaning (think "shine" in English): Keep the workplace free of hanging wires, grease, scraps, and waste. What do the authors here say about littering your code with comments and commented-out code lines that capture history or wishes for the future? Get rid of them.

- *Seiketsu*, or standardization: The group agrees about how to keep the workplace clean. Do you think this book says anything about having a consistent coding style and set of practices within the group? Where do those standards come from? Read on.

- *Shutsuke*, or discipline (*self*-discipline). This means having the discipline to follow the practices and to frequently reflect on one's work and be willing to change.

If you take up the challenge—yes, the challenge—of reading and applying this book, you'll come to understand and appreciate the last point. Here, we are finally driving to the roots of responsible professionalism in a profession that should be concerned with the life cycle of a product. As we maintain automobiles and other machines under TPM, breakdown maintenance—waiting for bugs to surface—is the exception. Instead, we go up a level: inspect the machines every day and fix wearing parts before they break, or do the equivalent of the proverbial 10,000-mile oil change to forestall wear and tear. In code,

refactor mercilessly. You can improve yet one level further, as the TPM movement innovated over 50 years ago: build machines that are more maintainable in the first place. Making your code readable is as important as making it executable. The ultimate practice, introduced in TPM circles around 1960, is to focus on introducing entire new machines or replacing old ones. As Fred Brooks admonishes us, we should probably re-do major software chunks from scratch every seven years or so to sweep away creeping cruft. Perhaps we should update Brooks' time constant to an order of weeks, days or hours instead of years. That's where detail lies.

There is great power in detail, yet there is something humble and profound about this approach to life, as we might stereotypically expect from any approach that claims Japanese roots. But this is not only an Eastern outlook on life; English and American folk wisdom are full of such admonishments. The Seiton quote from above flowed from the pen of an Ohio minister who literally viewed neatness "as a remedy for every degree of evil." How about Seiso? *Cleanliness is next to godliness.* As beautiful as a house is, a messy desk robs it of its splendor. How about Shutsuke in these small matters? *He who is faithful in little is faithful in much.* How about being eager to re-factor at the responsible time, strengthening one's position for subsequent "big" decisions, rather than putting it off? *A stitch in time saves nine. The early bird catches the worm. Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today.* (Such was the original sense of the phrase "the last responsible moment" in Lean until it fell into the hands of software consultants.) How about calibrating the place of small, individual efforts in a grand whole? *Mighty oaks from little acorns grow.* Or how about integrating simple preventive work into everyday life? *An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. An apple a day keeps the doctor away.* Clean code honors the deep roots of wisdom beneath our broader culture, or our culture as it once was, or should be, and *can* be with attentiveness to detail.

Even in the grand architectural literature we find saws that hark back to these supposed details. Think of mies van der Rohe's doorknobs. That's *seiri*. That's being attentive to every variable name. You should name a variable using the same care with which you name a first-born child.

As every homeowner knows, such care and ongoing refinement never come to an end. The architect Christopher Alexander—father of patterns and pattern languages—views every act of design itself as a small, local act of repair. And he views the craftsmanship of fine structure to be the sole purview of the architect; the larger forms can be left to patterns and their application by the inhabitants. Design is ever ongoing not only as we add a new room to a house, but as we are attentive to repainting, replacing worn carpets, or upgrading the kitchen sink. Most arts echo analogous sentiments. In our search for others who ascribe God's home as being in the details, we find ourselves in the good company of the 19th century French author Gustav Flaubert. The French poet Paul Valery advises us that a poem is never done and bears continual rework, and to stop working on it is abandonment. Such preoccupation with detail is common to all endeavors of excellence. So maybe there is little new here, but in reading this book you will be challenged to take up good disciplines that you long ago surrendered to apathy or a desire for spontaneity and just

"responding to change."

Unfortunately, we usually don't view such concerns as key cornerstones of the art of programming. We abandon our code early, not because it is done, but because our value system focuses more on outward appearance than on the substance of what we deliver.

This inattentiveness costs us in the end: *A bad penny always shows up*. Research, neither in industry nor in academia, humbles itself to the lowly station of keeping code clean. Back in my days working in the Bell Labs Software Production Research organization (*Production*, indeed!) we had some back-of-the-envelope findings that suggested that consistent indentation style was one of the most statistically significant indicators of low bug density. We want it to be that architecture or programming language or some other high notion should be the cause of quality; as people whose supposed professionalism owes to the mastery of tools and lofty design methods, we feel insulted by the value that those factory-floor machines, the coders, add through the simple consistent application of an indentation style. To quote my own book of 17 years ago, such style distinguishes excellence from mere competence. The Japanese worldview understands the crucial value of the everyday worker and, more so, of the systems of development that owe to the simple, everyday actions of those workers. Quality is the result of a million selfless acts of care—not just of any great method that descends from the heavens. That these acts are simple doesn't mean that they are simplistic, and it hardly means that they are easy. They are nonetheless the fabric of greatness and, more so, of beauty, in any human endeavor. To ignore them is not yet to be fully human.

Of course, I am still an advocate of thinking at broader scope, and particularly of the value of architectural approaches rooted in deep domain knowledge and software usability. The book isn't about that—or, at least, it isn't obviously about that. This book has a subtler message whose profoundness should not be underappreciated. It fits with the current saw of the really code-based people like Peter Sommerlad, Kevlin Henney and Giovanni Asproni. "The code is the design" and "Simple code" are their mantras. While we must take care to remember that the interface is the program, and that its structures have much to say about our program structure, it is crucial to continuously adopt the humble stance that the design lives in the code. And while rework in the manufacturing metaphor leads to cost, rework in design leads to value. We should view our code as the beautiful articulation of noble efforts of design—design as a process, not a static endpoint. It's in the code that the architectural metrics of coupling and cohesion play out. If you listen to Larry Constantine describe coupling and cohesion, he speaks in terms of code—not lofty abstract concepts that one might find in UML. Richard Gabriel advises us in his essay, "Abstraction Descant" that abstraction is evil. Code is anti-evil, and clean code is perhaps divine.

Going back to my little box of Ga-Jol, I think it's important to note that the Danish wisdom advises us not just to pay attention to small things, but also to be *honest* in small things. This means being honest to the code, honest to our colleagues about the state of our code and, most of all, being honest with ourselves about our code. Did we Do our Best to "leave the campground cleaner than we found it"? Did we re-factor our code before checking in? These are not peripheral concerns but concerns that lie squarely in the center of

Agile values. It is a recommended practice in Scrum that re-factoring be part of the concept of "Done." Neither architecture nor clean code insist on perfection, only on honesty and doing the best we can. *To err is human; to forgive, divine.* In Scrum, we make everything visible. We air our dirty laundry. We are honest about the state of our code because code is never perfect. We become more fully human, more worthy of the divine, and closer to that greatness in the details.
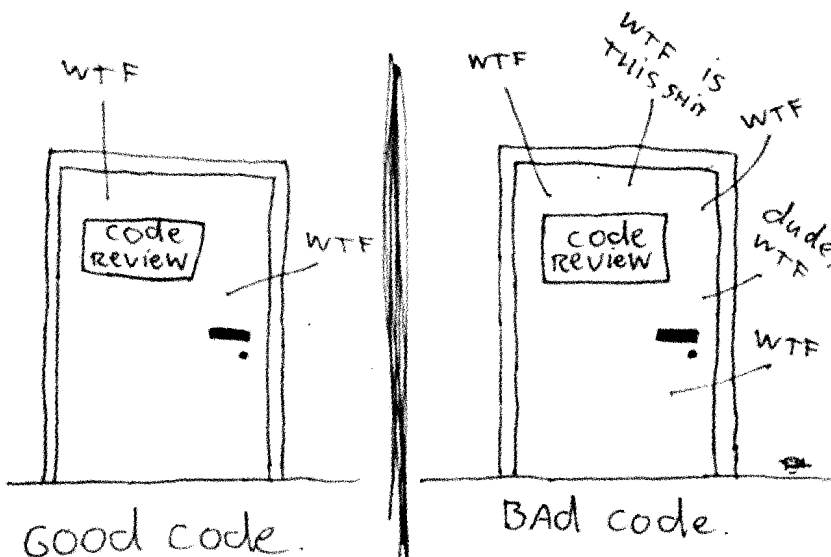
In our profession, we desperately need all the help we can get. If a clean shop floor reduces accidents, and well-organized shop tools increase productivity, then I'm all for them. As for this book, it is the best pragmatic application of Lean principles to software I have ever seen in print. I expected no less from this practical little group of thinking individuals that has been striving together for years not only to become better, but also to gift their knowledge to the industry in works such as you now find in your hands. It leaves the world a little better than I found it before Uncle Bob sent me the manuscript.

Having completed this exercise in lofty insights, I am off to clean my desk.

James O. Coplien
Mørdrup, Denmark

Introduction

The only valid measurement of code quality: WTFs/minute

WTF

WTF

code
review

WTF

Good code.

WTF

WTF this is shit

WTF

dude, WTF

code
review

WTF

Bad code.

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http://www.osnews.com/story/19266/WTFs_m

Which door represents your code? Which door represents your team or your company?
Why are we in that room? Is this just a normal code review or have we found a stream of

horrible problems shortly after going live? Are we debugging in a panic, poring over code that we thought worked? Are customers leaving in droves and managers breathing down our necks? How can we make sure we wind up behind the *right* door when the going gets tough? The answer is: *craftsmanship*.

There are two parts to learning craftsmanship: knowledge and work. You must gain the knowledge of principles, patterns, practices, and heuristics that a craftsman knows, and you must also grind that knowledge into your fingers, eyes, and gut by working hard and practicing.

I can teach you the physics of riding a bicycle. Indeed, the classical mathematics is relatively straightforward. Gravity, friction, angular momentum, center of mass, and so forth, can be demonstrated with less than a page full of equations. Given those formulae I could prove to you that bicycle riding is practical and give you all the knowledge you needed to make it work. And you'd still fall down the first time you climbed on that bike.

Coding is no different. We could write down all the "feel good" principles of clean code and then trust you to do the work (in other words, let you fall down when you get on the bike), but then what kind of teachers would that make us, and what kind of student would that make you?

No. That's not the way this book is going to work.

Learning to write clean code is *hard work*. It requires more than just the knowledge of principles and patterns. You must *sweat* over it. You must practice it yourself, and watch yourself fail. You must watch others practice it and fail. You must see them stumble and retrace their steps. You must see them agonize over decisions and see the price they pay for making those decisions the wrong way.

Be prepared to work hard while reading this book. This is not a "feel good" book that you can read on an airplane and finish before you land. This book will make you work, *and work hard*. What kind of work will you be doing? You'll be reading code—lots of code. And you will be challenged to think about what's right about that code and what's wrong with it. You'll be asked to follow along as we take modules apart and put them back together again. This will take time and effort; but we think it will be worth it.

We have divided this book into three parts. The first several chapters describe the principles, patterns, and practices of writing clean code. There is quite a bit of code in these chapters, and they will be challenging to read. They'll prepare you for the second section to come. If you put the book down after reading the first section, good luck to you!

The second part of the book is the harder work. It consists of several case studies of ever-increasing complexity. Each case study is an exercise in cleaning up some code—of transforming code that has some problems into code that has fewer problems. The detail in this section is *intense*. You will have to flip back and forth between the narrative and the code listings. You will have to analyze and understand the code we are working with and walk through our reasoning for making each change we make. Set aside some time because *this should take you days*.

The third part of this book is the payoff. It is a single chapter containing a list of heuristics and smells gathered while creating the case studies. As we walked through and cleaned up the code in the case studies, we documented every reason for our actions as a heuristic or smell. We tried to understand our own reactions to the code we were reading and changing, and worked hard to capture why we felt what we felt and did what we did. The result is a knowledge base that desribes the way we think when we write, read, and clean code.

This knowledge base is of limited value if you don't do the work of carefully reading through the case studies in the second part of this book. In those case studies we have carefully annotated each change we made with forward references to the heuristics. These forward references appear in square brackets like this: [H22]. This lets you see the *context* in which those heuristics were applied and written! It is not the heuristics themselves that are so valuable, it is the *relationship between those heuristics and the discrete decisions we made while cleaning up the code in the case studies.*

To further help you with those relationships, we have placed a cross-reference at the end of the book that shows the page number for every forward reference. You can use it to look up each place where a certain heuristic was applied.

If you read the first and third sections and skip over the case studies, then you will have read yet another "feel good" book about writing good software. But if you take the time to work through the case studies, following every tiny step, every minute decision—if you put yourself in our place, and force yourself to think along the same paths that we thought, then you will gain a much richer understanding of those principles, patterns, practices, and heuristics. They won't be "feel good" knowledge any more. They'll have been ground into your gut, fingers, and heart. They'll have become part of you in the same way that a bicycle becomes an extension of your will when you have mastered how to ride it.

Acknowledgments

On the Cover

The image on the cover is M104: The Sombrero Galaxy. M104 is located in Virgo and is just under 30 million light-years from us. At it's core is a supermassive black hole weighing in at about a billion solar masses.

Does the image remind you of the explosion of the Klingon power moon *Praxis*? I vividly remember the scene in *Star Trek VI* that showed an equatorial ring of debris flying away from that explosion. Since that scene, the equatorial ring has been a common artifact in sci-fi movie explosions. It was even added to the explosion of Alderaan in later editions of the first *Star Wars* movie.

What caused this ring to form around M104? Why does it have such a huge central bulge and such a bright and tiny nucleus? It looks to me as though the central black hole lost its cool and blew a 30,000 light-year hole in the middle of the galaxy. Woe befell any civilizations that might have been in the path of that cosmic disruption.

Supermassive black holes swallow whole stars for lunch, converting a sizeable fraction of their mass to energy. $E = MC^2$ is leverage enough, but when M is a stellar mass: Look out! How many stars fell headlong into that maw before the monster was satiated? Could the size of the central void be a hint?

The image of M104 on the cover is a combination of the famous visible light photograph from Hubble (right), and the recent infrared image from the Spitzer orbiting observatory (below, right). It's the infrared image that clearly shows us the ring nature of the galaxy. In visible light we only see the front edge of the ring in silhouette. The central bulge obscures the rest of the ring.

But in the infrared, the hot particles in the ring shine through the central bulge. The two images combined give us a view we've not seen before and imply that long ago it was a raging inferno of activity.
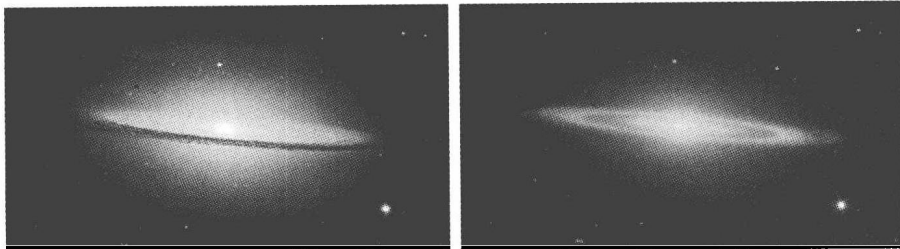
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