# Pragmatic Thinking and Learning: Refactor Your Wetware (Pragmatic Programmers)

*Andy Hunt*
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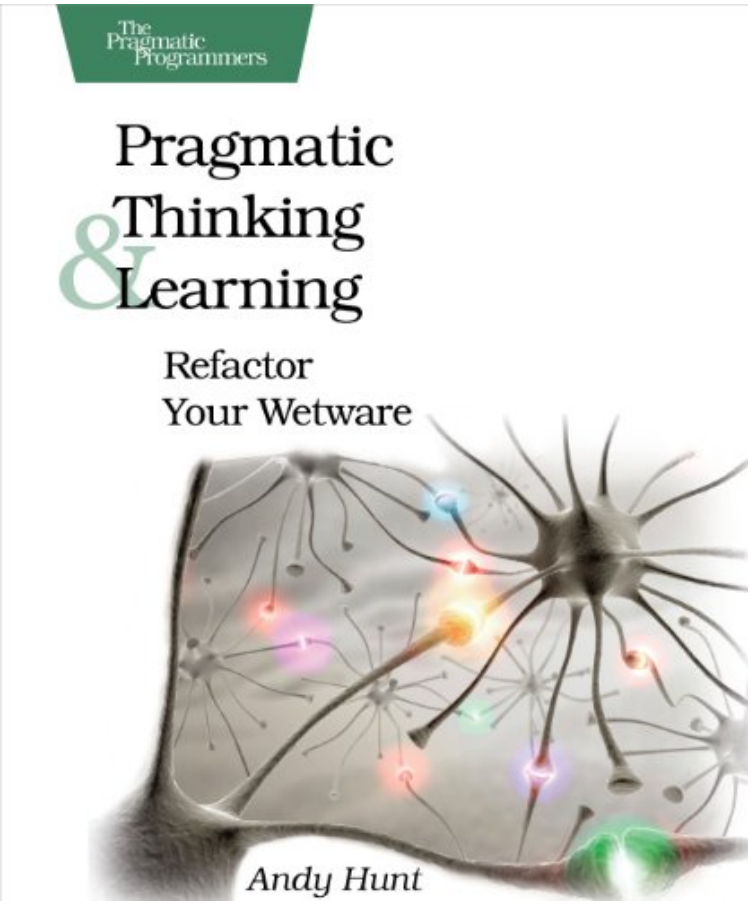




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**Andy Hunt : Pragmatic Thinking and Learning: Refactor Your Wetware (Pragmatic Programmers)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pragmatic Thinking and Learning: Refactor Your Wetware (Pragmatic Programmers):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Thoughts on thinking and learningBy Erik GfesserHunt states in the introduction that the goal of his text is to "help guide you through accelerated and enhanced learning and more pragmatic thinking", and that he is "a programmer, so my examples and rants will be directed at the world of software development. If you're not a programmer, don't worry; programming really has little to do with writing software in arcane, cryptic languages (although we have a curious attachment to that habit). Programming is all about problem solving". Later, Hunt writes that "whether you're a programmer or frustrated user, you may have already suspected that software development must be the most difficult endeavor ever envisioned and practiced by humans", but that "we tend to make programming much harder on ourselves than we need", and "the good news is that we can fix that right here and right now. This book will help show you how". While this reviewer agrees with the statements by the author

on the non-trivial nature of software development, and thinks that this text contains interesting material, especially in the first half, this book does not show how to improve one's software development endeavors in any meaningful way. This reviewer completely disagrees however with some of the other reviewers here, who state that the author heavily depends on some of the older research on left- and right- brain thinking, or that he resorts to one-size-fits all methods for readers, because Hunt clearly states throughout the text that neither of these is true in his case (and this reviewer always reads entire texts before submitting reviews, so he can attest to this aspect of the book).This reviewer enjoyed Hunt's discussion on the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition, which outlines five discrete stages through which one must pass on their journey: the novice, the advanced beginner, the competent, the proficient, and the expert. It is always interesting to read about this journey, and although many seem to choose five stages for models, somehow it makes sense to do so (this reviewer for example usually thinks of the career of a software professional as a series of progressive stages: coder, programmer, software developer, software engineer, and software architect). Hunt follows up this presentation writing that "by misunderstanding the Dreyfus model, we can rob them of their expertise. It's actually easy to derail an expert and ruin their performance. All you have to do is force them to follow the rules". The author continues by stating that "intuition is the tool of the expert in all fields, but organizations tend to discount it because they mistakenly feel that intuition 'isn't scientific' or 'isn't reasonable'. So, we tend to throw out the baby with the bathwater and don't listen to the experts to whom we pay so much. Conversely, we also tend to take novices and throw them in the deep end of the development pool - far over their heads." To sum up his points, Hunt states that "this is the progression from novice to expert, away from detached and absolute rules and into intuition and (remember systems thinking?) eventually part of the system itself". Very well said.The chapter entitled "Get in Your Right Mind" was also well done. After a high-level discussion on the different modes of brain processing in the previous chapter, Hunt continues by investigating how these modes might apply to the reader. Contrary to some other reviewers here, this reviewer enjoyed some of the author's sidebars, including one named "Sh**ty First Drafts", in which Hunt shares a quote from author Anne Lamott: "Perfectionism is the voice of the oppressor, the enemy of the people. It will keep you cramped and insane your whole life, and it is the main obstacle between you and a sh**ty first draft. I think perfectionism is based on the obsessive belief that if you run carefully enough, hitting each stepping-stone just right, you won't have to die. The truth is that you will die anyway and that a lot of people who aren't even looking at their feet are going to do a whole lot better than you, and have a lot more fun while they're doing it". And although much of the information in the chapter entitled "Learn Deliberately" might be found elsewhere (including from one's own experience), Hunt well presents information on why one's ability to learn might be the most important element of success, starting with what learning is and is not actually all about: "Many HR departments haven't figured this out yet, but in reality, it's less important to know Java, Ruby, .NET, or the iPhone SDK. There's always going to be a new technology or a new version of an existing technology to be learned. The technology itself isn't as important: it's the constant learning that counts". This reviewer especially appreciated the author's follow-up on this topic later in the chapter, where he states that "one major difference between knowledge investments and financial investments is that all knowledge investments have some value. Even if you never use a particular technology on the job, it will impact the way you think and solve problems".2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Pragmatic Improvement For Knowledge WorkersBy Glenn WynenAndy Hunt hit the mark for me with this book. I am a knowledge worker whose work life has most of the challenges that are described in "Pragmatic Thinking and Learning". Information overload, rapid learning, constant change and seemingly endless organizational shifting all mean that my wetware is in a fluid need of refactoring.Can't stay focused? Try some simultaneous sensory input. Experiencing too many distractions? Organize your thinking with context in mind. Need to convey a task description to someone really well? Find out where they are on the novice to expert spectrum.These are but a few of the areas that are treated. On top of that, practical "Next Actions" are offered to get the reader up and making improvements right away.All in all, the book is very insightful, well explained and readable.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Interesting Review of Thinking and How to Think BetterBy K. Scott Proctor"Pragmatic Thinking and Learning: Refactor Your Wetware" is a book about thinking and learning. Andy Hunt, the author, elegantly and logically builds a story about how the human brain thinks and learns.This book offers a great deal more than a common "how to" book in that Hunt provides a great deal of context associated with the topics that he covers. With many direct references to other books and material, I found myself noting a lot of the books that Hunt references as books for future reading.Anyone with a desire to maximize the manner in which they think and learn, or a desire to understand these processes better, stands to benefit from this book. Highly recommended due to its real-world uses and implications, combined with its rich and interesting historical content.

Programmers have to learn constantly; not just the stereotypical new technologies, but also the problem domain of the application, the whims of the user community, the quirks of your teammates, the shifting sands of the industry, and the evolving characteristics of the project itself as it is built.Wersquo;ll journey together through bits of cognitive and neuroscience, learning and behavioral theory. Yoursquo;ll see some surprising aspects of how our brains work, and how you can take advantage of the system to improve your own learning and thinking skills.In this book yoursquo;ll

learn how to:Use the Dreyfus Model of Skill Acquisition to become more expertLeverage the architecture of the brain to strengthen different thinking modesAvoid common ldquo;known bugsrdquo; in your mindLearn more deliberately and more effectivelyManage knowledge more efficiently

"Irsquo;ve recommended it to anyone who will stand still long enough to listen to me. I was familiar with some of the ideas and techniques from my various readings on the science of learning, but its invaluable to have them gathered in one concise book, especially one geared towards developers."