

Homework 7: System design reading

The author argues that the most popular and pervasive ('better') computer system is not the most correct, consistent or complete one ('worse'), but rather the one that is the most simple to implement even at the expense of other important characteristics. Therefore, he concludes from history that it seems better to compromise on 'rightness' so that the product can spread fast and wide, which would in turn increase the motivation to improve its 'rightness'. However, he disapproves of this design philosophy (exemplified by C and Unix) which he likens to computer viruses, and believes in prioritising 'rightness' over everything else (as exemplified in Lisp and Scheme).