



appreciating abstraction

a visualization by Jonathan Lam

“In software engineering and computer science, abstraction is a technique for arranging complexity of computer systems. It works by establishing a level of complexity on which a person interacts with the system, suppressing the more complex details below the current level. The programmer works with an idealized interface (usually well defined) and can add additional levels of functionality that would otherwise be too complex to handle.” (“Abstraction (software engineering),” Wikipedia)

Modern living is abstracted to a tremendous degree, fundamental universal forces constantly optimizing life and existence. Simplicity is built upon complexity, compromising control and performance for convenience. Invention can take root from the foundation, such as the discovery of the elementary Higgs boson particle, or it can stem from the highest branches of developed human thought, adding to complex theories such as quantum mechanics and string theory.

Have a look at the varying levels of abstraction shown in the model. Where do you find yourself going to first? Where would you start?