Introduction to Programming

Programming is often looked at as a massive beast to tackle. There are a ton of factors that go into thinking about starting programming. You need to consider what language you want to work with, what you want to do with programming, learning the basics of computer based math, and memorizing syntax. When you add all those things up, the whole task seems quite daunting. All of those questions are ones I had obsessed over when first learning programming, but none of those questions are what I want to talk about when first considering the idea of programming.

Let’s borrow some ideas from information theory for a moment. Consider an image that is completely black. Every single pixel is set to have an red, green, and blue value of zero. If someone asked you to tell them what that image is, you might say “There is no image.” If you would consider an image as a form of information, then you could say there is no information in that completely black image. Now let’s consider an image where the brightness of every red, green, and blue pixel in the image is completely random. This image would look like if you took a photo of television static at any given moment. If you were to take a photo of the television static at any other given moment, it would be different, but the interesting thing about television static is that you have no way of predicting what the image would look like next. Television static is a physical representation of what we call isolated noise. If noise is defined as “Irregular fluctuations that accompany a transmitted electrical signal but are not part of it and tend to obscure it” then isolated noise does not contain a signal. We could also say if it does not contain a signal then it contains no information. Therefore, randomness is not information. There are at least two ways of defining nothing. (I know there very well could be information in what we currently call noise, but this ‘proof’ is based on our current understanding of quantum mechanics)

So, what the fuck does all of this have to do with programming?

I believe there are only two ways of approaching programming. One of which is starting from a completely blank slate, a black image (if you will) and the other is starting by diving head first into the noise. I think most people believe that you must learn the structure from the ground up to understand computer programming, but I think that is a dated way of looking at learning the topic.

We live in a world of abstraction. To turn on your oven, you turn a knob to the temperature you require. To watch a video, you pull out your phone, find a video on someone else’s server and simply press the play button. To type a useless introduction to learning how to program, you simply turn on your computer, open this thing called “Word” and just start typing your fucking brains out. And we need to take advantage of that. Let’s not make noise out of nothing, but let’s make nothing out of noise.