

WHEN WE ABSTRACT TO MAKE MAPS

Suppose that you and a friend are strolling on a sidewalk in a quiet suburban neighborhood. About a block away a man appears with a very large Labrador retriever on a leash. Your friend stops, and tenses up. The following dialog takes place.

You: “What’s wrong?”

Friend: “There’s a dog up there.”

You: “So What?”

Friend: “I am afraid of dogs!”

You: “Why?”

Friend: “Dogs bite”

You: “Do you think this one will bite you?”

Friend: “I don’t know, but I prefer not to take a chance.”

You: “Suppose he did bite you. What would that do?”

Friend: “It would hurt and I would get rabies.”

You: “So you are not really afraid of dogs. You are afraid of getting hurt, and rabies.”

Friend: “Yeah. Does that make a difference?”

You: “Well, consider this. Automobiles kill pedestrians. In the last twenty minutes a whole bunch of cars have passed us and none have jumped the curb to kill you.”

By now the man with the dog is approaching. Your friend positions himself to put you between himself and the dog and says, “I’ll take my chances with automobiles, you can take your chance with the dog.”

As the man and dog pass, the man gives you a casual greeting and the dog gives you a cursory sniff. The man and his dog continue up the street, where they come upon a small group of young children playing in a yard. One exclaims, “Look at the big dog!” With that they all run out of the yard to see the dog. A five-year-old youngster runs over to the dog and throws his arms around the dog’s neck and gives him a hug. At that point, the youngster looks up at the owner and says, “Does he bite?” (True story)

The owner replies, “No, you’re lucky. He likes little kids. But in the future, before you pet or touch somebody’s dog, ask him or her if it is all right to do so first. Not all dogs like kids.”