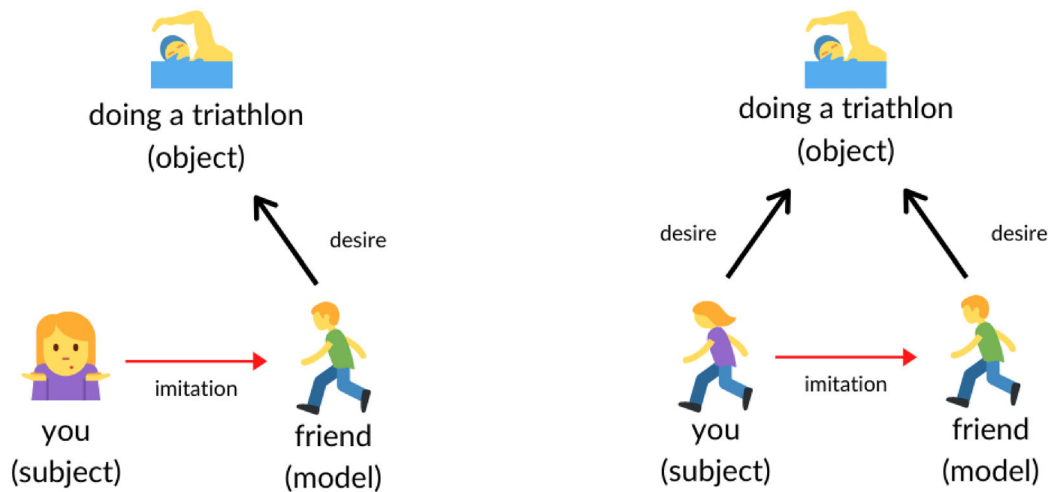


Mimetic Desire - how do we make choices?

Are you at a crossroads in life, trying to decide upon a career, a move, or achieving a milestone?

Everyone knows that living life means making choices, but how do we make choices? Why do we pick one thing instead of another? Rene Girard gave a simple answer, it is called “**Mimetic Desire**”. We usually explain why we want something in one of two ways. We say we want it because it suits our unique preferences or we highlight the objective good qualities something has. Either way, we claim to choose autonomously, in isolation from others.

While he was reading and teaching classic literature, Girard realized that the great writers revealed a deeper layer of our psychology. Girard saw that in the classic works there is always a model, someone the protagonist admires and wants to be like. Just as the protagonist in a novel imitates an appealing model, we all patterned our choices on somebody else’s example. It might be a celebrity we have never met or it could be our best friend we have known all our lives. Girard says Man is a being who does not know what to desire and so he looks at what others are doing to help him make up his mind.



We want what others want because we imitate their behaviours. Instead of a direct “I want such-and-such”, our desires are **triangular and derivative** - “I want such-and-such just because someone else wants it.”

Girard’s insight sheds light on financial bubbles, fashion, social media, and every human interaction. It explains why people fight even when there is plenty to go around

and why conflicts are often worse when the stakes are smallest. When we model our desires on those of others, we end up competing for the same jobs, the same mates, the same real estate, and the same social status as everyone else. “What’s the solution?” Girard said, imitation is inevitable, so we can’t just stop imitating. The most important choice in each of our lives may not be where to go to school? What career to pursue? Or even who to marry? It may be, **who to imitate?**

Make a wise choice.



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