

“There is mimesis* - itself a power of mind, a way of representing reality with one’s body and senses, a uniquely human capacity no less important than symbol or language. Merlin Donald, in *Origins of the Modern Mind*, has speculated that mimetic powers of modeling, of inner representation, of a wholly nonverbal and non-conceptual type, may have been the dominant mode of cognition for a million years or more in our immediate predecessor, *Homo erectus*, [occurring] before the advent of abstract thought and language in *Homo sapiens* (Saks, O. (1995) pp. 240-241).

* Comes from the Greek word mimesis, from *mimeisthai* (to imitate). A few cousins of this word are mimic, mime, and mimosa, i.e. to copy, to take on the appearance of, or imitate closely, especially in speech, expression, and gesture. Mimicking is the portrayal via bodily imitation or representation of aspects of the sensible world.

Footnote: Jerome Bruner, who studied cognitive growth in children so minutely, speaks of “enactive” representation as its first expression. The enactive, he emphasizes; though it is supplemented by subsequently developed forms of cognition or representation (which he terms the “ikonics” and “symbolic”), is not superseded by them, but remains throughout life a potent mode of expression, instantly available for use. So it is with Donald’s mimetic stage - this did not go out with *Homo erectus*, but remains a perpetual and powerful part of our own “sapient” repertoire. All of us make frequent use of such nonverbal behaviors and communications; they are supremely developed in mimes, in actors, in all performing artists, and in the deaf Saks, O. (1995) p. 241).