MediaWell

News Item

Bad Algorithms Didn’t Break Democracy | WIRED

By Gideon Lewis-Kraus
January 15, 2020

> As Girard had it, we are defined and constituted as a species by our reliance on imitation. But we are not mere first-order mimics: When we ape what someone else does, or covet what someone else has, we are in fact trying to want what they want. “Man is the creature who does not know what to desire, and he turns to others in order to make up his mind,” Girard wrote. “We desire what others desire because we imitate their desires.” Unable to commit to our own arbitrary wants, we seek to resemble other people—stronger, more decisive people. Once we identify a model we’d like to emulate, we train ourselves to make the objects of their desire our own.
>
> The emotional signature of all this imitation—or mimesis—is not admiration but consuming envy. “In the process of ‘keeping up with the Joneses,’ ” Thiel writes, “mimesis pushes people into escalating rivalry.” We resent the people we emulate, both because we want the same things and because we know we’re reading from someone else’s script. As Girard would have it, the viability of any society depends on its ability to manage this acrimony, lest it regularly erupt into the violence of “all against all.”
>
> […]

Source: Bad Algorithms Didn’t Break Democracy | WIRED