

MOVIE IDEALS SUBTLY GRIP AMERICAN PUBLIC

Movies do not cause crime in the direct way which is often assumed by those who believe that much of the youthful crime and delinquency of this country can be traced to direct imitation of crimes seen on the screen. The influence of the movies is more subtle than direct imitation, according to Prof. Ellsworth Faris, of the University of Chicago department of sociology.

Only a part of the influence of movies is of the "conscious" copying" type of imitation which is found in the spread of fashions. This method, Prof. Faris believes, rests ultimately on the ambitions of the imitator and on the admiration that he holds for the one imitated, rather than on an automatic instinct of imitation. Less tangible but of vastly more importance is the "slow, unconscious" type of imitation by which ideals, moral codes and purposes displayed on the screen become part of the ideals, moral codes and purposes of the beholder. The process of taking over these ideals is the same as that by which dialects or mannerisms or personal prejudices are acquired. People normally rehearse to themselves experiences they have been through and in this mental drama take not only the part they played but the parts played by other people in the experience. Through thus playing the role of another the attitudes and mannerisms of the other may be absorbed unconsciously. In witnessing a movie something of the same process occurs.

"The dramatic art," said Prof. Faris, "identifies the spectator with the principal character so that the wishes and ideals and purposes are shared by the beholder. The living for an hour in such a sympathy with a character does have an influence on the personality which may lead to unconscious imitation."

Moreover, he continued: "Vicious or lawless acts by any character may remain as suggestion possibilities for later critical situations and produce emotional and imitative behavior."

Thus a boy who sees gun play in the movies may not go out and immediately shoot someone, but later a critical situation may release a gun-shooting attitude previously acquired. This "imitation", if so it may be called, is similar to that which takes place in a mob; the mob situation does not create imitative ideas and acts but merely releases prejudices and ideas already held but previously latent.

There is danger in the inhibiting effect which seeing too many movies may have. Prof. Faris said:

"The happy ending, which means that all problems are solved for the hero, has a tendency to turn life into reverie and day dreaming and instead of being a spur to action may operate to paralyze and inhibit, since everything will probably come out all right in the end anyhow."

Eskimos are very fond of whale meat.

Sea water freezes at 28 degrees Fahrenheit.