

The essay uncanny by sigmund freud

Psychology



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Freud developed the concept of the uncanny in the early 1900's. He wanted to investigate the kind of creeping horror, that deviates from the standard fight or flight response to a scary situation.

The word 'uncanny' is derived from the German word, unheimliche. Unheimliche is the 'not' version of heimliche, a word which means homey, familiar, or private. After adding the 'un,' the meaning transforms to tell the story of something strange and foreign, but also with some aspect of familiarity to it.

In Freud's essay about the uncanny, he explored the concept in two key ways. The first was delving into the meaning behind the word's origin: unheimliche, as described above. The second was to look into different examples of the uncanny, and attempt to find any common threads.

There are a few key examples of the uncanny that Freud discussed that I would like to mention here. One common one is the threat of not knowing if something is dead or alive, real or unreal. A classic way this concept is played with is with the case of automatons. Often automatons can appear to look or act like a real person, which can lead to an underlying uncertainty about their realness. Another example of the uncanny is repetition. This can manifest in a couple of different ways. One way is repeated coincidences. One example that Freud brought up was seeing one specific number somewhere. If you see that same specific number repeated in multiple different contexts on the same day, it can evoke feelings of the uncanny. The repetition of typically uncommon events relates to the uncanny, because part of the uncanny is everyday reality being disturbed in some ways. A final

common example of the uncanny is separated body parts. It combines the familiar (the human body that we're familiar with), with the foreign (body parts aren't usually disembodied). It symbolizes a part of the uncanny that deals with weird or wrong intrusions into life.

Overall, the uncanny is a very interesting concept that Freud developed. It explores what the mind doesn't typically like to think about in a way that is foreign yet familiar. It deals with where reality is slightly distorted in a way that's barely perceptible, but you can still tell something is wrong. One of the more uncanny experiences I've had was during my junior year of high school. That year was my short-lived career (only a year long) as an assistant stage manager, and eventually a stage manager, of my high school's theatre department. This meant I spent a lot of long hours in a deserted theatre long after the actors had left. Often, it would just be me, a couple of dedicated techies putting away the props, our stage manager, and the director.