Uncanniness

Uncanniness, according to Heidegger, is the related to the falleness of Dasein into the “They” (das Man). Dasein is understood in the everyday publicness of the “they” as a “Being-at-home.” However, uncanniness seems to stem from Dasein itself, an original unfamiliarity with that which it is most familiar, its own Being as such. “This uncanniness pursues Dasein constantly, and is a threat to its everyday lostness in the “they”, though not explicitly” (Being and Time, 233-234.) Heidegger, as does Freud before him, plays on the German word Unheimliche, which means predominantly uncanny, but always in relation to that which is most familiar. Where Freud argued that the uncanny was related to Dasein’s worries of a return to the “magical thinking” of its infancy’s primary narcissism, Heidegger argues that argues that Dasein’s uncanniness is related to its future, not its primordial past. Heidegger argues that Angst or dread is a way of Being-in-the-world in which Dasein recognizes that it flees in the face of its death by enveloping itself with the world around it. “When falling we flee into the ‘at home’ of publicness, we flee in the face of ‘not-at-home’; that is, we flee in the face of uncanniness which lies on Dasein—in Dasein as thrown-being-in-the-word, which has been delivered over to itself in its being” (Being and Time, 234). Otherwise put, uncanniness is the mark of the anxiety of Being-towards-death, towards that which can never be made familiar in terms of being the possibility of impossibility, death itself.

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