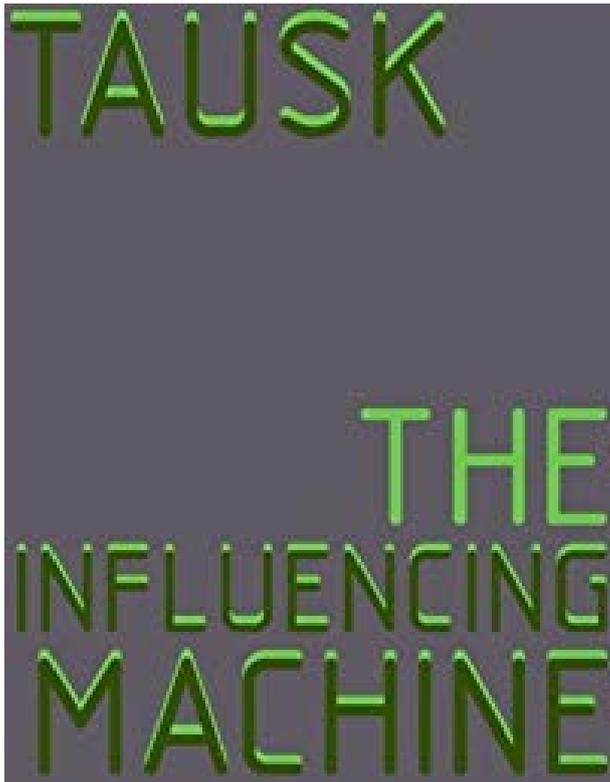


The Influencing Machine



Author:	Viktor Tausk
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Viktor Tausk's analysis and interpretation of the terrifying machine supposed to be controlling the mind of his patient Natalija A., is a bold and compellingly original contribution to the study of mental illness and a thrilling restatement of the fundamentals of psychoanalysis in miniature. From the Foreword In order to consider psychosis the author sets out and qualifies the mechanisms of neurosis; his strained-down rich concentrate text parallels the taut, compact musical compositions by Alban Berg and Anton Webern created in the same post-WWI years also in Vienna. Tausk was a Žilina-born 'first generation' psychoanalyst and close colleague of Sigmund Freud. But Tausk was not like some of the dull academics surrounding the leader of the psychoanalytical movement: he dated showgirls, and actresses, and had a year-long affair (1912-13) with Nietzsche's ex-squeeze Lou-Andreas Salomé . .

. here is an essay about insanity, hallucination, and the mechanisms of delusion, that is, paradoxically, an inspiring and uplifting read. Alongside Judge Schreber's memoirs and Freud's commentary on them--published in 1911--Tausk's text remains one of the pillars that support our modern research into psychosis. Tausk describes and qualifies the astonishing beliefs held by patients Josef H., Emma A., and--above all--Natalija A. who is convinced that her free will has been substituted and taken over by a machine; the machine is a human-size automaton woman (perhaps something like Hans Bellmer's cumbersome posable female doll La poupée), a robot woman--it is well known, the patient relates, that the use of these machines is prohibited by the police. The machine is powered by batteries which are placed where the internal organs would normally be. (Her disturbing image takes us straight back to/foreshadows the simulacra android designed by Pris Frauentzimmer in Philip K.

Dick's We Can Build You.) When someone strikes this machine, then Natalija feels the force of the blow directly; and 'those who handle the machine produce a slimy substance in her nose, disgusting smells, dreams, thoughts, feelings, and disturb her while she is thinking, reading or writing.' About the author Viktor Tausk (March 12, 1879, Žilina - July 3, 1919) was a pioneer psychoanalyst and neurologist. A student and a colleague of Sigmund Freud, he was the earliest exponent of psychoanalytical concepts with regard to clinical psychosis and the personality of the artist. Tausk had been a lawyer and writer when he began to study medicine in Vienna around 1910.

He joined the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society and soon began to contribute papers.

In 1919, Tausk published a paper on the origin of a delusion common to a wide array of schizophrenic patients, namely that an alien device, malignant and remote, had influenced their thoughts and their behavior. This device was referred to as the Influencing Machine and the paper is the most well known of his publications, reaching beyond his own field of research into others, such as literary theory for example. About the translator Dorian Feigenbaum graduated in medicine from the University of Vienna in 1914, his training including a period of study at the Institute of Psychiatry in Munich with Kraepelin. He worked in private practice in Switzerland and later in Palestine, where he served as Director of the Hospital for Mental Diseases in Jerusalem.

About the foreword Henry Bond is a writer, photographer, curator and visual artist. In his *Lacan at the Scene* (Slavoj Žižek, series ed., *Short Circuits*, MIT Press, 2009), Bond made a contribution to theoretical psychoanalysis.