



The Manufacture of Madness

Thomas Szasz

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s/t: A Comparative Study of the Inquisition & the Mental Health Movement

In this seminal work, Dr. Szasz examines the similarities between the Inquisition and institutional psychiatry. His purpose is to show "that the belief in mental illness and the social actions to which it leads have the same moral implications and political consequences as had the belief in witchcraft and the social actions to which it led."

The Manufacture of Madness Details

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John says

Brilliant. Well done Mr. Szasz. Of course I disagree with many of his political, religious, and historical analyses, but no one understood the truth about psychiatry like Szasz. Five stars.

<https://psychiatricurvivors.wordpress...>

David Gross says

This book shows how the “mentally ill” category serves as a form of social control that has evolved directly from the category of “heretic.” Although psychiatry uses the language of medicine, it has been more commonly used as a justification for the involuntary incarceration and remolding of behavioral deviants. The “diseases” that psychiatry discovers are defined not by their nature as medical pathology, but by their behavioral symptoms which are defined as “disease” in order to prohibit or suppress them.

Joseph Newton says

Interesting study of the role of the scapegoat in society across time and space. The author's central argument is that the inquisition never ended, but morphed into what we know today as Institutional psychiatry. The inquisitor of yesterday is today's institutional psychiatrist. The game remains the same, only the players have changed, or changed names atleast. "Just as the Inquisition was the characteristic abuse of Christianity, so Institutional Psychiatry is the characteristic abuse of medicine" (XXIX). Sociology of deviance; civil libertarianism; feminism; anthropology of medicine; psychiatric history; medieval history; humanism.

Laura says

Heard about this in class, 7/8/08

Lydia says

Possibly the biggest influence on me, career wise, so far, in that it made me want to be almost anything other than directly involved with the practice of Psychology/Psychiatry

Charlie says

A free thinker's delight. What Szasz says in essence is that social engineering is no more fun from a modern and secular/"scientific" world view than it was from a religious/"moral" world view. The problem with the "enlightened" perspective (in power) down through the ages remains. The right and responsible people need witches and madmen to justify their righteousness and they need jails torture and death sentences to justify their responsibility. A must read for anyone who has ever been incarcerated in a mental institution against their will or lost loved ones in a holy crusade.

Anthony says

Fantastic and complex read.

Logan Albright says

The 9th book I've read by Szasz and the best one yet. A brutal look at how, while the objects of persecution and torture have changed over time, the basic method has not. We used to lock up homosexuals, mutilate masturbators, and burn witches. Now we imprison, bully, intimidate, and drug the depressed, the anxious, drug users, gamblers, and those who hear voices that we cannot hear. Man's desire to destroy what is different has not become more enlightened, it has only changed its mask.

Donald says

"The Manufacture Of Madness" and "The Myth Of Mental Illness" are two of the most intriguing non-fiction books of the late twentieth century. Dr. Thomas Szasz presents a compelling argument that modern psychiatry has become all too accustomed to labeling any inconvenient behavior as an "illness." Exactly who decides what is "normal?" This book is wordy and difficult to wade through in parts, but Szasz makes his points well and his arguments are difficult to discard. This book would make an especially appropriate read for someone who is confused and on the verge of being declared mentally ill. It can't hurt them worse than whatever drugs will undoubtedly be prescribed for them.

Erik Graff says

This book really is a comparison between modern institutional psychiatry and the inquisitions against witches and Szasz manages four hundred pages of such without becoming overly redundant or facile.

The predication of "psychiatry" as "institutional" is vital to Szasz' arguments. Himself a psychoanalytically trained psychiatrist, he has no problems with voluntary contracts between individuals. What exercises his ire is coercion, stigmatization and the confusion of categories.

The primary categorical confusion discussed in this book is that of treating certain behaviors as if they were symptomatic of disease despite the lack of any testable evidence of aetiology. Much of what passes for "mental illness", the object of psychiatric attention, is not, by this standard, a medical condition at all--not, at least, if psychiatry is presumed to be a medical science. More properly, certain behaviors are representative

of social conditions, their interpretations being instrumental to methods of social control.

Having been trained for a career as a psychotherapist myself and having, for at least a decade, expected to head in that direction, I have always found Dr. Szasz' works to be challenging. He may, along with such "anti-psychiatrist" figures as R.D. Laing, have contributed to my increasing disenchantment with the profession and failure to pursue that path.

One of the big issues in my social world is alcohol, some of my friends and relatives being identified as "alcoholics"--some contesting this identity, some embracing it. But what might this mean? Alcoholism is commonly treated as a genetic predisposition, stemming from upbringing or biology or both, the one reinforcing the other, fashionably conceptualized nowadays as a medical condition, a disease, whereas the more traditional view held it to be a moral condition, a sin. Szasz would question the category itself, seeing it as a questionable reification of a host of discourses and behaviors involving alcohol or its avoidance. Unless or until a certain aetiology can be demonstrated, the concept of "alcoholism", like that of the broader concepts of addiction or "addictive personality", confuses more than clarifies various modalities of the human condition. Yet, despite this, I find myself repeatedly falling back into the common sense of all of us living in a world where there are persons who suffer, or don't suffer, from alcoholism, addiction, schizophrenia, bipolarism, borderline personality disorder, ADHD, anorexia etc--despite the paucity of scientific evidence for the existence of such supposed diseases.

In order to impress his point upon the reader Szasz devotes much of this book to the exposition of conditions once considered as existentially defining, but now rejected. The primary condition treated is witchcraft, but lengthy attention is also given to negritude (as a medical condition related to leprosy), to homosexuality and to masturbative insanity. A similar exposition might be essayed as regards the various editions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association, homosexuality-as-disease, for instance, being a condition which has disappeared from its pages in my adult lifetime.

Tanya Van says

Detailed and facsinating history of the medicalisation of non conformity.

Brassy Bottle says

This man was brilliant. He saw right through the sham of the usual bollocks "men of medicine" enforce on their fellows. Or more accurately, on women since women are (as usual) at the bottom of the human heap. No wonder Official Psychiatric Institutions shunned him.

?Misericordia? ~ The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?????? ✿*♥? says

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