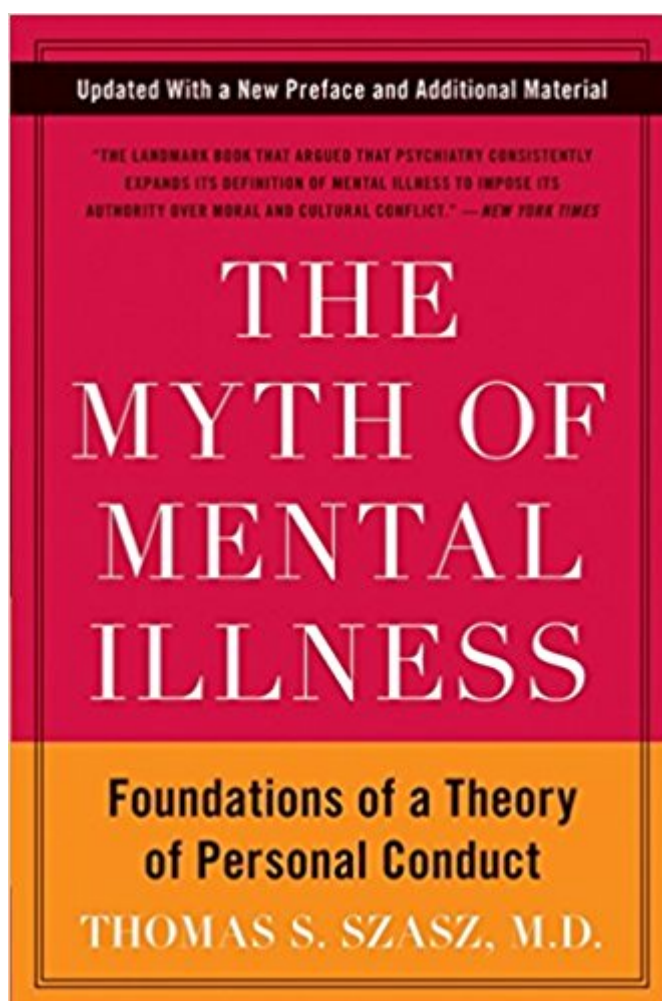


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The Myth Of Mental Illness: Foundations Of A Theory Of Personal Conduct



Synopsis

50th Anniversary Edition With a New Preface and Two Bonus Essays
The most influential critique of psychiatry ever written, Thomas Szasz's classic book revolutionized thinking about the nature of the psychiatric profession and the moral implications of its practices. By diagnosing unwanted behavior as mental illness, psychiatrists, Szasz argues, absolve individuals of responsibility for their actions and instead blame their alleged illness. He also critiques Freudian psychology as a pseudoscience and warns against the dangerous overreach of psychiatry into all aspects of modern life.

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Customer Reviews

"Bold and often brilliant." -- --Science --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A classic work that has revolutionized thinking throughout the Western world about the nature of the psychiatric profession and the moral implications of its practices. "Bold and often brilliant."--Science --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I will start by saying I have Bipolar Disorder, and have struggled with it for many years. I've had some time off recently, so I wanted to really investigate the science behind my disorder. I started with two books on mental health policy over the past 50 years ("American Psychosis" for a negative take, and "Better but Not Well" for a more positive, mainstream take), then I read the latest

psychiatric information about the disorder- the suspected genetic causes , the brain chemistry approach, the neurological evidence from the official peer-reviewed literature. I altogether found it unsatisfying. Everywhere I turned, it was always "While the specific mechanism is unknown, it is believed..." or "While specific genes cannot be found, it does seem to run in families..." Even the neurological explanation didn't seem able to distinguish cause from effect, or come up with any predictive mechanism. I began to really question the mainstream, so I read "Anatomy of an Epidemic", which was an excellent summary of all the research showing that the brain-chemistry model is ineffective. I even investigated my own medication, and found that Lamictal, the primary drug of choice for bipolar treatment, was found to be ineffective in 7 out of 9 clinical trials (Of course GSK only published the positive two).All Thomas Szasz really says here is that we can't view mental illness, that is to say, the major mood disorders and psychoses, as normal diseases. We can't pretend that mental illness is some exogenous force that is totally irrelevant of the victim's life experiences, the victims traumas and tragedies, and the victim's behaviors. In fact, new research into the psychosocial explanation finds very strong evidence for the importance of these things in predicting the incidence of mental illness. And if its true, as Szasz argues, that there is this very strong psychosocial element, then therapy to understand these issues and perceptions and to allow the patient to change behavior is the best option for treatment. Again, research shows the efficacy of Psychotherapy in general as well as CBT specifically.Finally, I can say he is 100% correct in his assertion that much of psychiatry is inhumane. Involuntary treatment, and even the attitude that certain ways of life are "right" and other ways "bad," are means of controlling people. They are a way for society to get rid of undesirables and call it compassion, and on the other side, an escape valve for the oppressed. A key piece of evidence for this is that "homosexuality" was a mental illness for a long time, something we would scoff at now; that was a means of social control, not a means of helping the patient. Healing can only occur in an atmosphere of respect and dignity, where the doctor respects the patient's rights and autonomy, and where the patient takes responsibility.The book is quite plodding at points, but if you skip his abstract explanations and jump straight to the examples he gives, it is very clear. While I'm not convinced that all mental illness is purely a construction, I think Szasz hits the nail on the head for the general direction Psychiatry has moved.

Thomas Szazs prophetic prediction of where the label "mental illness" would get us is as relevant as it has ever been.

Read it for a grad school class. Awesome. Really interesting. Highly recommend.

This book is a must read for anyone interested in learning more about the epistemological nature of psychology and about the recent invention of the mental health field.

Very important critique of psychiatry

An interesting look at psychology.

Thomas Szasz wrote this ground-breaking book quite awhile ago, but it's still relevant, maybe moreso, in our current state of overmedication, ridiculous DSM entries, and dangerous medication no better than placebos.

shed light on the issue of mental illness.

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