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The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of ...

The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct [Thomas S. Szasz] on Amazon.com. *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. 50th Anniversary Edition With a New Preface and Two Bonus Essays
The most influential critique of psychiatry ever written

The Myth of Mental Illness

The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct is a 1961 book by the psychiatrist Thomas Szasz, in which the author criticizes psychiatry and argues against the concept of mental illness. It received much publicity, and has become a classic, well known as an argument against the tendency of psychiatrists to label people who are "disabled by living" as "mentally ill".

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Mental illnesses are communicative actions, to be understood in terms of motives, rule following, and the like, and hence inevitably involving moral judgments, in contrast to bodily disorders which happen to the patient, and are to be understood in terms of conventional causality.

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In fact, the very concept of mental illness is incoherent. Disease is defined by a physical pathology, but if one has a brain lesion, then by definition it's part of neurology. Psychiatry is by its nature what doesn't belong to neurology. Mental illness is a metaphor that became so ingrained that people take it literally.

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