

*Szasz under fire: the psychiatric abolitionist faces his critics*

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42-4685 RC437 2004-6826 CIP Szasz under fire: the psychiatric abolitionist faces his critics, ed. by Jeffrey A. Schaler. Open Court, 2004. 450p bibl index afp ISBN 0812695682, \$36.95

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Without a doubt, Thomas Szasz is one of the most controversial and polarizing psychiatrists of our day. His thesis that "mental illness" is a myth (nothing but a metaphor) has sparked a lively debate in and out of the psychiatric profession. Szasz is very much concerned that the state has given psychiatrists too much power to control citizens and take away their liberty. He has argued with force and passion against physician-assisted suicide, compulsory commitment of the "mentally ill," physician control of citizen access to drugs, the insanity defense, and the definition of addiction as a disease. Human liberty is at the heart of Szasz's perspective. This book provides an informative and frank dialogue between Dr. Szasz and 13 noted critics, each of whom critiques a specific argument by Szasz. Szasz then replies to each with intensity and insight. This interaction is stimulating and informative, but at times too abstract and abstruse. However, this does not take away the value of the conversation. The book includes an autobiographical sketch of Dr. Szasz and a personal appendix.

Summing Up: Recommended. Graduate students and above;  
general readers.-R. L. Jones, emeritus, Pennsylvania State University, College  
of Medicine

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