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Thomas Szasz: Anti-Psychiatry

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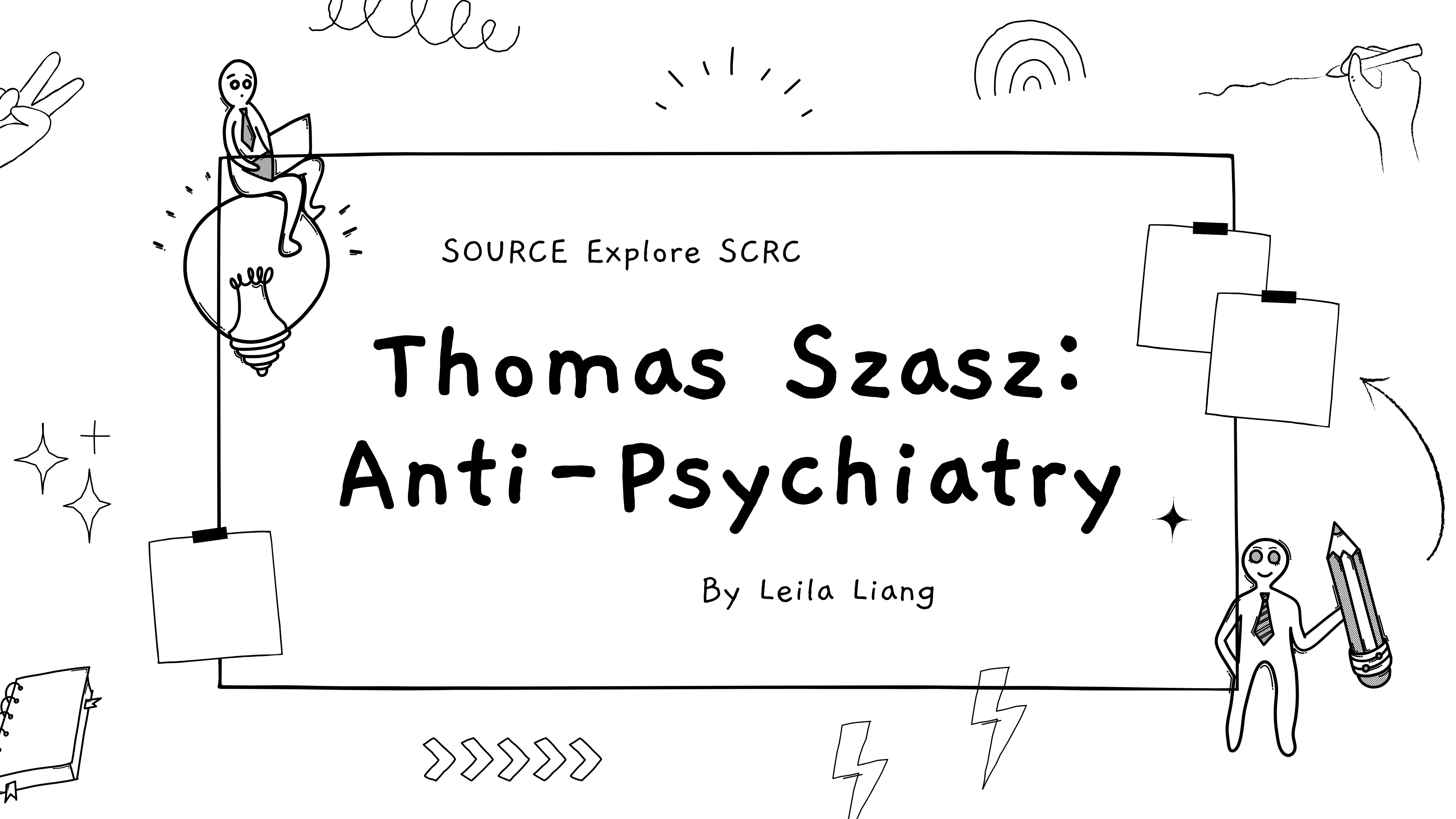


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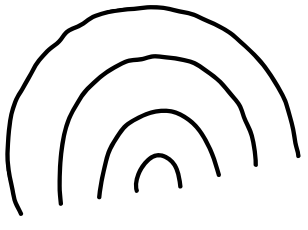
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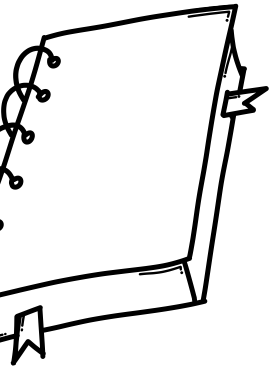
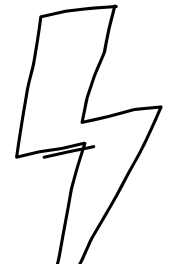
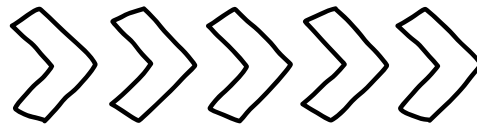
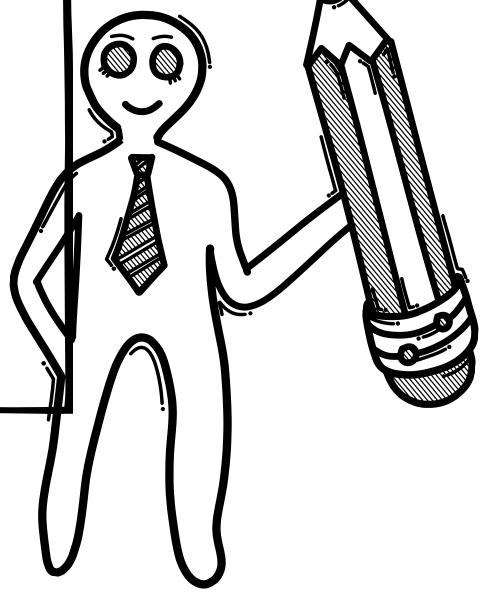
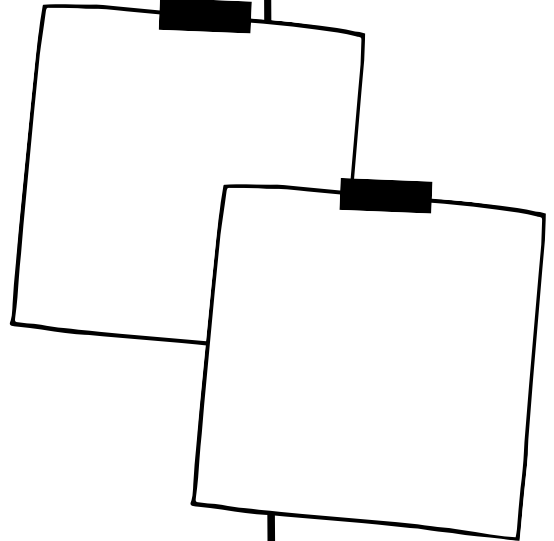
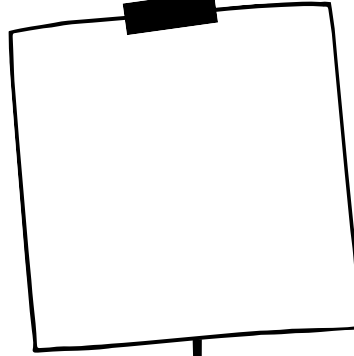
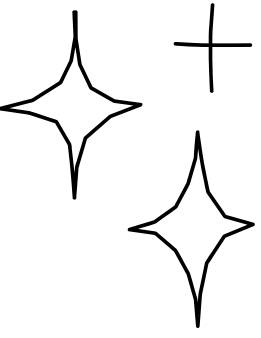
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SOURCE Explore SCRC

Thomas Szasz: Anti-Psychiatry

By Leila Liang

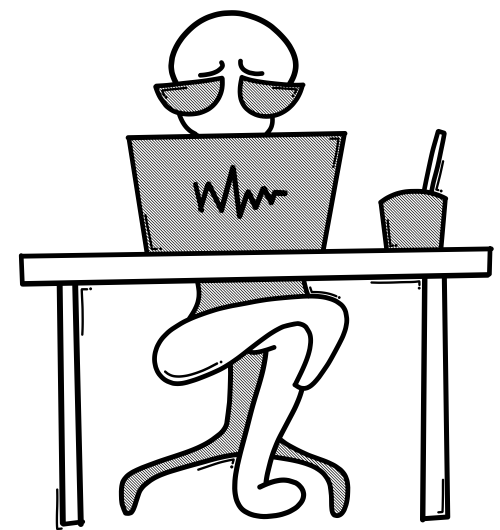
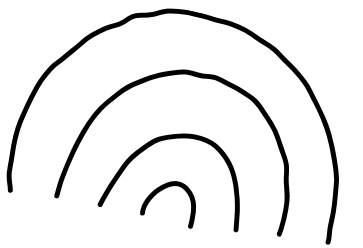
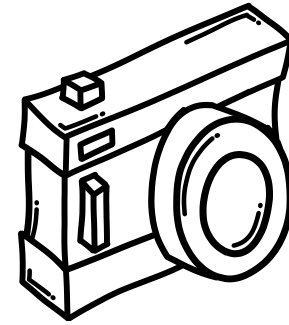


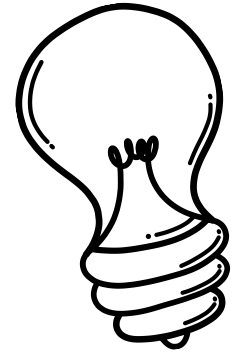
Introduction

- Born in Budapest, Hungary in April 15, 1920
 - Family left for the US in 1938
- Dr. Szasz graduated from the University of Cincinnati, earning an M.D. and later a psychiatric certification in 1950
- He joined SUNY Upstate in 1956 as a professor of psychiatry
- Died in September 8, 2012



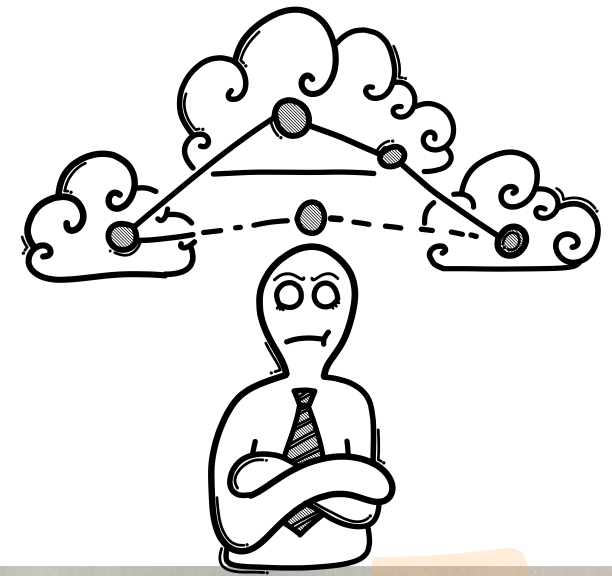
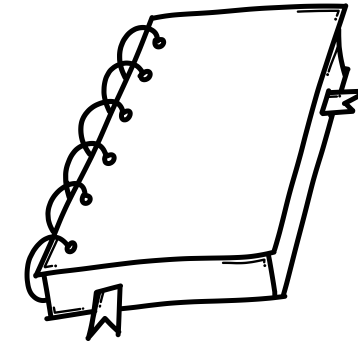
Dr. Szasz





"The Myth of Mental Illness"

- Psychiatrists now attribute mental illness as diseases to be cured through methods such as drugs and various therapies (electroshock)
- However, Dr. Szasz thought of mental illness as "problems of the living"
- If it was a physical problem within the brain, the term should be limited to brain disease



My objection to this model of mental illness is, again, twofold. First, it authenticates the proposition that countless personal, religious, legal, political, and social problems are properly classified as "diseases" and thus implies that if such "mental diseases" could be prevented or cured, life would be meaningful and peaceful. The proponents of this view thus replace a biological reductionism with a psychosocial reductionism.

Secondly, whereas the advocates of an organic concept of mental illness classify certain brain diseases as "mental diseases," the advocates of a psychosocial concept of it use the term "mental illness" metaphorically but insist that it is a literal disease nevertheless. Put differently, the organic psychiatrist claims that mental illness is a disease and then names the wrong organ as the seat of the malady ("mind" rather than brain). Whereas the

Responses

- Initially, his view was received poorly
 - “another egghead contribution from an academic ivory tower”
 - “accused of betraying his own profession”
- However, he gained a lot of supporters who held the same beliefs

TO: Roy A. Childs

ANGRY RESPONSE

“...It takes only one bad apple to spoil the whole bushel and I say that you are a bad apple and besides I say that you your self are sick and you should be put behind bars, give you a taste of your own medicine. Your ideas are as much of a crime against the peoples rights and against the by laws of the medical oath”

GOOD RESPONSE

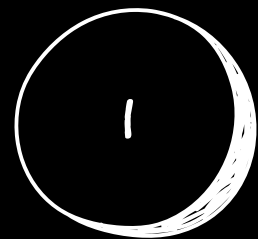
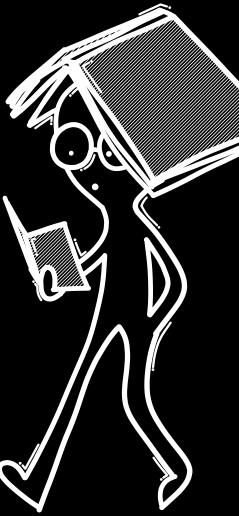
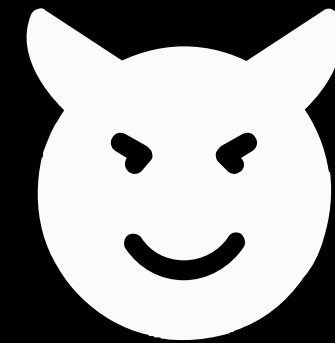
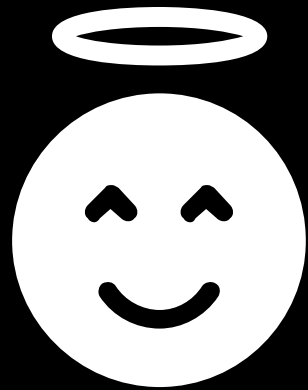
I very much appreciate what you have done for humanity [...] You challenged those who used psychological terms to attack other people's life styles and opinions; you insisted that the attackers instead honestly admit that their psychological jargon was a cover for their own disapproval...”

CRITIQUE

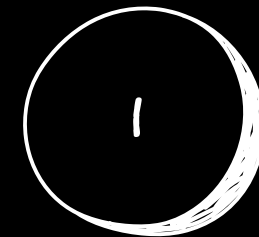
“However, in your enthusiasm for your theme, you grossly overstate your case in my opinion. Hysteria cannot be used as a paradigm of all disorders of mentation. It cannot serve as a model for such disorders as deliria, amentia, dementia and the like with which psychiatry has always been concerned.”

elle

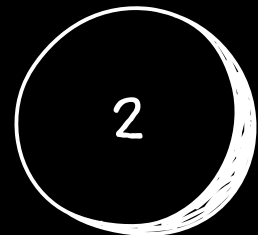
So... Was he a good guy?



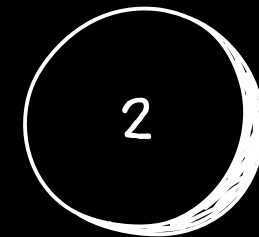
Advocated for de-institutionalization



Definition of mental illness is too limited to physical problems



Believed that psychiatrists had too much power over patients



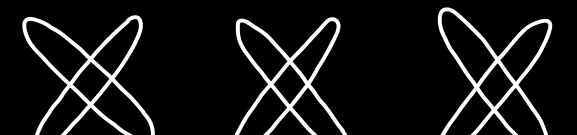
Trivialized mental illnesses like schizophrenia and major depression disorder to just "human problems"



Called for womens' rights to abortion



Believed in patient's autonomy, but what about cases where patient's safety is at risk?



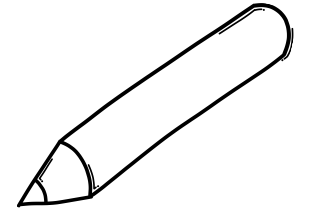
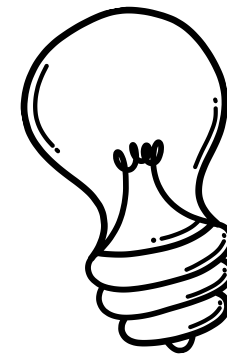
The Lasting Effects of Dr. Szasz



- Encouraged a now more biological approach to psychiatry to diagnose a patient
- But, at that critical time, it delegitimized the mental health field and pushed for autonomy of patients instead
- The number of patients in psychiatric hospitals fell from 550,000 in the mid-50s to less than 150,000 in the late 70s
 - homeless population, many of them with abnormal disorders, increased
 - incarceration rate increased as well



What I've learned



1

Importance of putting myself in the time period of the material to understand the external factors



- State of psychiatric hospitals
- extreme use of electroshock therapy and lobotomies
- glorifying psychiatrists

2

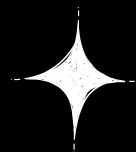
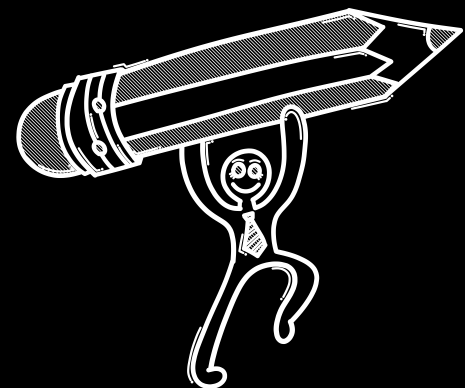
Asking questions for further research



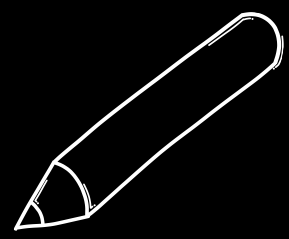
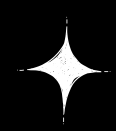
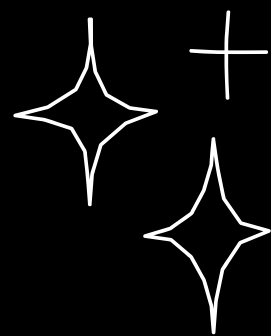
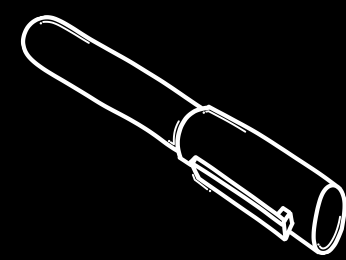
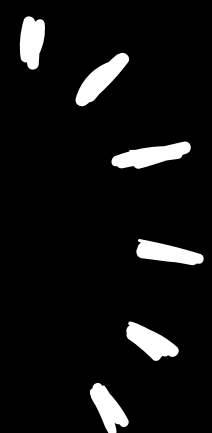
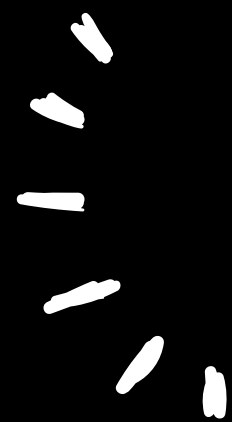
- “What were initial responses vs responses now?”
- “How did his upbringing influence his views?”



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Thank you for
your time!



External Sources

Thomas Szasz: Rebel with a questionable cause - the lancet. (n.d.).

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(12\)61789-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(12)61789-9/fulltext)

Kelly BD, Bracken P, Cavendish H, Crumlish N, MacSuibhne S, Szasz T, Thornton T. The Myth of Mental Illness: 50 years after publication: What does it mean today? *Ir J Psychol Med*. 2010 Mar;27(1):35-43. doi: 10.1017/S0790966700000902. PMID: 30282293.