



From Patients to Persons: The Psychiatric Critiques of Thomas Szasz, Peter Sedgwick and R.D. Laing (American University Studies)

Janet Vice

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The role of psychiatric theory and practice has become increasingly controversial in contemporary society. Both psychiatry's scientific status as a medical specialty and its moral legitimacy as a helping profession have been called into question by outstanding figures within the profession. This original study examines the work of three leading critics of psychiatric theory and practice - Thomas Szasz, R.D. Laing, and Peter Sedgwick - from a specifically philosophical perspective. The author argues that disagreements over the nature, role, and failures of psychiatry are traceable to philosophical disagreements over the meanings of personhood and community. *From Patients to Persons* identifies the metaphysical and axiological assumptions at the heart of these disagreements. In so doing, it provides fresh evidence that philosophy plays a key role in the structure and evaluation of our medical, social and political practices.

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