

Reading Suggestions by Lannie Beckman

SZASZ, Thomas S. LAW, LIBERTY AND PSYCHIATRY; AN ENQUIRY INTO THE SOCIAL USES OF MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICES. 1963, Macmillan, paperback. VPL: 340.6 S99L. Also his IDEOLOGY AND INSANITY: ESSAYS ON THE PSYCHIATRIC DEHUMANIZATION OF MAN. 1970, Doubleday, paperback.

One of Szasz' latest books, Ideology and Insanity, is a collection of eye-opening essays on what might be called "creeping psychiatry", examining the malignant intrusion of the psychiatric industry into almost all institutions in Western society. Szasz takes the reader on a tour of these institutions (which include schools, universities, community mental health centres, mental hospitals, the courts and the home) pointing out the ways in which psychiatry represses and abridges freedom in the name of therapy, treatment and care. The book's main strength lies in exposing the logical connection between theories of "mental illness" on the one hand and their application as instruments of social control on the other.

An earlier and more important work, Law, Liberty and Psychiatry, is a manifesto delineating the oppression suffered by all those called "mentally ill", and outlining a program necessary to achieve their liberation. The reader is shown the complicity of the legal and psychiatric professions in stripping mental patients of their human rights. Szasz describes this process as "moral Fascism". He writes, "Upon those unwilling to heed peaceful persuasion, the values of the state will be imposed by force: in political Fascism by the military and the police; in moral Fascism by therapists, especially psychiatrists."

GOFFMAN, Erving ASYLUMS: ESSAYS ON THE SOCIAL SITUATION OF MENTAL PATIENTS AND OTHER INMATES. 1961, Anchor, paperback. VPL: 362.2 G61a.

Asylums describes the brutal realities facing inmates of "total institutions" such as mental hospitals. Based on the author's first hand observations, the book spells out the procedures used to erode the patient's volition while enforcing his conformity to the totalitarian rules of the institution. Goffman, now a Director of the Association to Abolish Involuntary Hospitalization, shows why "mental hospital" and "therapy" are simply euphemisms for "prison" and "punishment".

RADICAL THERAPIST: THE "RADICAL THERAPIST" COLLECTIVE. Produced by Jerome Agel. 1971, Ballantine, paperback.

A collection of articles, etc. chiefly reprinted from the periodical of that name, now changed to Rough Times (\$12 yr. P.O.Box 89, West Somerville, Ma 02144, USA); a second volume is announced for this fall. This one gives an excellent overview of the depth and breadth of issues touched upon in the periodical. The common theme implicit in each of the 30-35 articles gathered here is that "therapy means change, not adjustment." This view is most eloquently phrased in the Manifesto of the periodical itself: "Therapy today has become a commodity, a means of social control. We reject such an approach to people's distress. We reject the pleasant careers with which the system rewards its adherents. The social system must change, and we will be workers towards such change. But to be true instruments of change, therapy and therapists must be liberated from their own forms of oppression." A second volume of collected articles will be published this fall.

FOUCAULT, Michel MADNESS AND CIVILIZATION; A HISTORY OF INSANITY IN THE AGE OF REASON. 1965, New American Library, paperback. VPL: 132.1 F76h

Traces the underlying facts in the development of Western reason, the persecution of unreason or "madness". This is a critical look at the history of "mental illness" and it presents evidence that "mental illness" is not illness at all but rather a set of historical categories used in different times to ostracize anyone whose presence might be a threat to the status quo.

REICH, Wilhelm THE MASS PSYCHOLOGY OF FASCISM. 1st ed. 1933; 3rd ed. 1946; new trans. 1970, Farrar, paperback. VPL: 301.15 R34m

The political importance of this book cannot be overstated. Writing from a Marxist and psychoanalytic viewpoint Reich shows how repressive social forces (the family, state, etc.) can internalize their totalitarian logic in the minds of the people living under them. Hitler's rise to power is shown as manipulation of people who have been robbed of their capacity for freedom through socialized sexual repression.

MARCUSE, Herbert COUNTERREVOLUTION AND REVOLT. 1972, Beacon. VPL: 301.24 M32c

Marcuse is well-known for his highly theoretical works on Hegel and Freud and his political attacks on the repressive authority of monopoly capitalist society. His latest book grapples with the development of the latter into a state of stepped-up repression or counter-revolution against any and all subversion, at home or abroad. His analysis includes a look at the political and aesthetic forces which could liberate human beings in a new, socialist order.

JANOV, Arthur THE PRIMAL SCREAM; PRIMAL THERAPY: THE CURE FOR NEUROSIS. 1970, Putnam.
VPL: 616.891 J34p

This book is reactionary for several reasons; it presupposes a "cure" in one screaming episode and sees this "cure" as having very little to do with social or political relationships; it places dominance on heterosexuality seeing homoeroticism as "sick"; it offers a symbolic rather than social analysis of drug use. Apart from that it takes up an uninspiring, re-hashed A.S. Neill and Reichian look at family conflicts which produce "neurosis" - uninspiring because it has nothing new to say.

LAING, R.D. THE DIVIDED SELF; AN EXISTENTIAL STUDY IN SANITY AND MADNESS. 1960, Tavistock; Penguin, paperback. VPL: 132 L18d

An existential approach to "schizophrenia", Laing's first and possibly most incisive study makes for demanding but exciting reading. "Mental illness" is explored from the inside by presenting personal experiences, a valuable technique which is best developed in his later books - most notably, Self and Others, Sanity, Madness and the Family, and the recently revised The Politics of the Family.

COOPER, David PSYCHIATRY AND ANTI-PSYCHIATRY. 1967, Ballantine Paladin, paperback.

Cooper's rigorous exploration of theory, the case studies he presents, and the decentralized, "anti-psychiatric" institutions he describes, all provide an excellent, and brief, introduction to what is best in the Sartre-Laing approach to "abnormal" behaviour. Unfortunately, this book has been eclipsed in popularity by Cooper's most recent work, The Death of the Family, a provocative expose which lays bare the way in which experience is filtered, spontaneity stifled and class biases inflicted in our childhoods. Despite its Marxist tone, Cooper's latest effort frequently appears flighty and superficial; in sum, a disappointing sequel to his earlier penetrating critique.

November 1972

Radicals Look at the Books on

PSYCHOTHERAPY

Books reviewed by Lannie Beckman and Panel

Tuesday, November 14, 1972

7:30 p.m. Room 307

Vancouver Public Library

Fourth in a series arranged by the Committee for Radical Reading

3 October: THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT, Dorothy Smith
17 October: QUEBEC; Mordecai Briemberg

31 October: ENVIRONMENT, Robin Harger

28 November: EDUCATION, Jim McFarland
and panel