

Thomas Szasz, Manlius psychiatrist who disputed existence of mental illness, dies at 92

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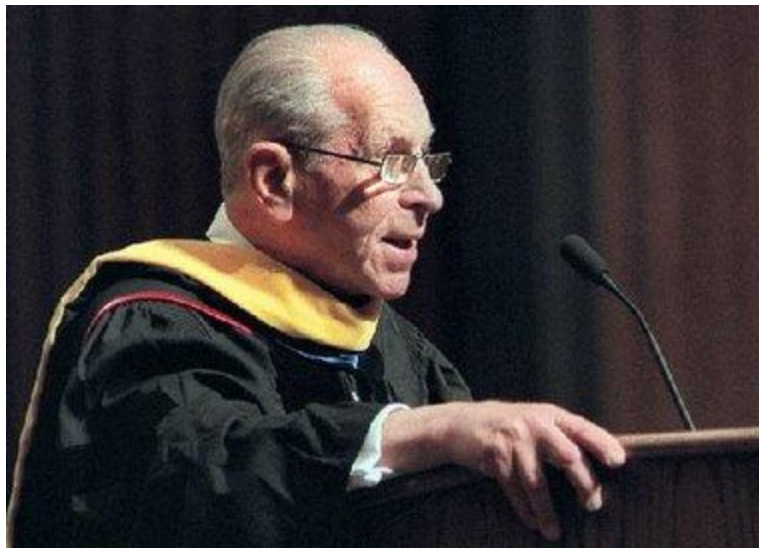
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By **John Mariani, The Post-Standard** The Post-Standard



Gary Walts / File photo

Dr. Thomas Szasz speaks at the 2001 commencement for Upstate Medical University, where he received an honorary doctor of science degree. Szasz, who died Saturday, was a psychiatrist known internationally for disputing the existence of mental illness.

Manlius, NY – Dr. **Thomas S. Szasz**, a psychiatrist who questioned the existence of mental illness and fought against the forced treatment of patients, died Saturday at his home in Manlius. He was 92.

In “The Myth of Mental Illness,” published in 1961, Szasz argued that behaviors that colleagues attributed to diseases of the brain actually described “problems in living.” He called treating people against their will “a crime against humanity” in a 1992 profile in The Post-Standard.

“I am probably the only psychiatrist in the world whose hands are clean,” Szasz told the newspaper. “I have never committed anyone. I have never given electric shock. I have never, ever, given drugs to a

mental patient.”

Born in Hungary, Szasz (pronounced ZOZ) emigrated to the United States in 1938 and graduated at the top of his class from the University of Cincinnati medical school in 1944.

He became a professor of psychiatry in 1956 at what is now Upstate Medical University in Syracuse. He published 35 books during his career. He retired from the university in 1990 and from private practice in 1995. He received the Human Rights Award in 1994 from the Citizens Commission on Human Rights and an honorary doctor of science degree in 2001 from Upstate Medical University.

Szasz is survived by his daughters, Dr. Margot Szasz Peters and Suzy Szasz Palmer, a grandson, Andrew Thomas Peters, and a brother, Dr. George Szasz. Funeral arrangements are private.

Read more:

» **Dr. Thomas Szasz, Psychiatrist Who Led Movement Against His Field, Dies at 92** (The New York Times)

1992 Post-Standard story explored Dr. Thomas Szasz's controversial views

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