

P S Y C H I A T R Y

"Psychiatry must stop its vast mystification of the people and get down to work!"

--Claude Steiner, Radical Psychiatry Manifesto

The work of psychiatry, according to its name, is "soul-healing." (Psyche = soul + iatria = healing) Our anxiety- discrimination- and violence-filled society frustrates enough hopes to make people sick to their very souls. Psychiatry could potentially be a movement for radical, enlightened change. Instead, it has sided with powerful established interests. Psychiatrists have mystified people into blaming themselves for their own misery, and have failed to challenge seriously basic social injustices.

As judges of "sanity", psychiatrists are given the power to decide whose opinions are valid and should be listened to, whose are crazy or deviant and should be ignored.

As "doctors", psychiatrists can prescribe drugs to change people's moods and behaviors--to make them docile, to deaden their frustration or their power to act against it--and can claim that they're doing this to help! They are truly the modern Grand Inquisitors.

Whatever psychiatry's claim of the "scientific approach" to human nature, it has generally not risen above common prejudice. For example, when psychiatrists study fat people, they study people whose lives have been haunted by prejudice; who knows how fat people would behave if they were free to grow up with self respect? How can psychiatrists be sure that the behaviors of unhappy people are the cause of their problems?

Psychiatrists paste the dignity of science onto every-day prejudice. Unless they commit themselves to be advocates of the oppressed and alienated, psychiatrists are very dangerous indeed.

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