

3. DISCUSSION OF SONTAG'S *ILLNESS AS METAPHOR* (2/11)

Sontag's essay is hurried and sometimes careless. In places she contradicts herself. But it provokes us to think about metaphor, and it encourages us to look for symbolic associations and meanings everywhere in life, not just in highly self-conscious symbols like the Christian cross or the hammer and sickle.

According to S, what are the similarities and differences between the images of cancer and TB? Why do the differences matter?

How is insanity like TB? Can you think of recent examples where insanity or psychological excess is glorified or romanticized?

According to S, what is wrong about attaching such ideas to a disease?

What is S's attitude to metaphor in general? Is she consistent? What does she mean by metaphor?

Why is S angry?

Why does S think it significant which part of the body an illness attacks?

How does disease individuate people or lump them together?

Can you think of ways other than those mentioned by S that we moralize disease?

Do you think attitudes towards heart attack patients have changed since S wrote? towards cancer?

What other conditions do we deal today with by labeling them as illness?

Is there a way to avoid metaphorizing illness?

Are cancer metaphors necessarily authoritarian and repressive? What about metaphors of the body and society?