

“Open-mindedness is an Achievement”

LOEX 2020

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Proposed threshold concept: Open-mindedness is an achievement, not a trait that one has by default. It requires careful attention to the best available evidence and argument on a question. It finds its fullest expression in the context of a loving pursuit of truth.

Element	Notes	Sources
Careful attention	Open-mindedness is an example of <i>moral attention</i> , the deliberate effort to see the other more clearly, charitably, and justly. It takes focus and resolve.	Murdoch, Iris. <i>The Sovereignty of Good</i> . London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970. Flanagan, Owen J. <i>The Geography of Morals: Varieties of Moral Possibility</i> . New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
Achievement	Open-mindedness is an intellectual virtue, and excellence of character. Open-mindedness requires the exercise of other intellectual virtues: humility, courage, and diligence. Not so easy!	Taylor, Rebecca M. "Open-mindedness: An intellectual virtue in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding." <i>Educational Theory</i> . Vol. 66, no. 5 (2016): 599-618.
Evidence and argument on a question	Open-mindedness applies to beliefs that we infer from evidence and argument (which makes it an important ideal for research). Open-mindedness only makes sense for beliefs that we can meaningfully question.	Hare, William. <i>In Defence of Open-Mindedness</i> . Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1985. Hare, William. <i>Open-Mindedness and Education</i> . Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993.
Loving pursuit of truth	Eros is the desire for the beauty of the other that draws you out of your complacency. Involves a longing for completeness in the other. Applies to love and learning.	Plato. <i>The Republic of Plato</i> . Translated by Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1968. Bloom, Allan. <i>The Closing of the American Mind</i> . New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987. Murdoch, Iris. <i>The Sovereignty of Good</i> . London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970.

Characteristics of threshold concepts:

1. Transformative - perspective-changing
2. Irreversible - you typically don't forget a concept that has remodeled your perspective
3. Integrative - reveals previously hidden connections among things
4. Conceptually Bounded (in a discipline?)
5. Troublesome - difficult to learn

From Meyer, Jan, and Ray Land. *Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge: Linkages to ways of thinking and practising within the disciplines*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2003. <http://www.etl.tla.ed.ac.uk/docs/ETLreport4.pdf>