

Transcript: A hospitable approach to religion and worldviews education 'A Pedagogy of Embrace'

In this short film which accompanies my research of the month, I am going to focus on the notion of embrace which lies at the heart of my doctoral thesis. I am going to read three short active contemplations on the concept of embrace which formed vignettes in my thesis, one on creating space, one on encountering others and one on listening for wisdom.

Creating Space: An active contemplation on the concept of embrace

The open arms of an embrace capture this concept of space.

The openness of the arms imply purpose. There is a reason for the arms held open, they are wanting to be in relationship with someone else.

The openness of the arms imply safety. The arms are enfolding, they imply security and comfort. They can be firm, yet relaxed.

The openness of the arms imply values. The open arms may have many meanings. They may be trusting, compassionate, forgiving, loving, hopeful. They speak of values.

The openness of the arms imply openness of mind. The open arms are not full, they allow for new encounters, for new knowledge, for new ideas.

The openness of the arms imply inclusivity and affirmation. The open arms are open to all, and the circling of the arms imply affirmation and welcome.

The openness of the arms imply a sense of solitude. The open arms suggest you are alone, but want relationship.

The openness of the arms imply a desire for collaboration. The open arms suggest desire for others.

The openness of the arms imply above all that there is something more. The open arms suggest that there is a lack of contentedness with the current status quo. That there is more through encounter, that the space is open, purposeful and holds meaning within it.

Encountering others: An active contemplation on the concept of embrace

The open arms imply openness to the other. The arms are receptive towards others, they imply a sense of encountering another person for who they are, not with assumptions.

The open arms imply humility. The arms show that I need someone else, I want to learn from them to embrace them for who they are.

The open arms imply authenticity. I come ready to listen and engage. I come open to learn and wanting to learn from the other. It also implies respect for the other person's space, they can embrace as closely as they want to without being swamped. Each remains distinct in the embrace, but are changed through the connection.

The open arms imply more than a shaking of hands. An embrace implies that I want to learn from this person, that I am accepting them into my space. That I want to encounter them as a person, a fellow human being, and that the encounter may change me (and them) in some way afterwards. The open arms of the embrace imply a sense of depth, moving beyond the superficial.

Listening for Wisdom: An active contemplation on the concept of embrace

The open arms imply a search for something beyond oneself. A search for wisdom in and through others. It implies that I need others, that I need to listen and learn beyond myself.

The open arms imply true enquiry, a sense of wanting to learn about the other in a genuine way. The focus is on the other person and what they bring; what they want to share with you. You are there to learn, to allow them to speak to you, as you actively listen.

The open arms imply an interconnectedness between two people. They are in a relationship. The embrace overcomes fear and offers welcome. There is a sense of accepting the other, appreciating and affirming them.

Creating space, encountering others and listening for wisdom – this is my pedagogy of embrace.