**Book Review**

# The Limitations of the Open Mind

**By Jeremy Fantl.**
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**A Review By**
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In constructing argumentation or in any conversations, open-mindedness is good for us to be good listeners. However, it is not always good. We sometimes have more plausible reasons not to be open-minded. Perhaps that is the main tenet of lessons learned and summarized from the present book written by the author, Jeremy Fantl.

If we find ourselves not appropriately sufficient to deal with our opponent's attack on our well-built theory and we cannot find any spot in the counterarguments even though we know quite well that the counterarguments are misled, should it be the very reason for us to be much more open-minded to the counterarguments? Fantl says no. His argument is not about to support us to stay stubborn with our theory, but about being aware of our insufficiency is not at all the reason for us to be open-minded *(pp.47-74).* On this point from Fantl's argument, for the sake of convenience I would call it 'the insufficiency thesis' with its meaning that one should not be open-minded after knowing no way out of the attacks which are spotless counterarguments. Fantl shows that the insufficiency thesis would lead to our avoidance of conversations with those rivals or at least to our close-mindedness in the conversations *(pp.152-153).* Some problems, such as spiritual phenomena and God's existence, are beyond human capability of reasoning and finding evidences. Each problem is an example to show why we should retain our belief even though academic experts argue against it *(pp. 75-100).*

What is the main target-point that Fantl tries to make his arguments against? The answer might be those who are totally convinced without asking any further questions that every problem should eventually be solved after the open-minded talk from both sides who are in conflicts is finished. Both sides should feel free and engaged to get into their debates *(pp. ix-x).* This argument is based on the

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ground that argumentation is universally interpreted as the activity of obligatory engagement. Nevertheless, Fantl argues against the existence of those universal characters *(p. 127).*

Open-mindedness is not always worth having when we are to engage in those talks, says Fantl *(pp. 150-153).* However, for some situations we are to engage open-mindedly in debating with the counterarguments especially when there are some new collected empirical evidences that need further interpretation and we are to be sincere to our audience to remain our stance of interpretation *(pp. 154-176).* These are two main theses for Fantl to show what ethics of open-mindedness should be.

Why should we think twice when we decide to write letters of invitation to "problematic" speakers? What is the definition of "problematic" here, and why should not we do it? Fantl argues that the problematic speakers are those who have been suspicious with behaviors of submission to some sort of belief that is against some group of minority audiences. If taking a position of giving lecture on the stage can point out that the audience must be there with some extent of their opened mind, it should be considered a betrayal to the minority audiences who are not going to agree with the lecture in the first place *(pp. 177-202).* This part could be called some additional considerations of Fantl's system of ethics for the audiences.

So far we have seen the continuous growth of epistemology of disagreement. Fantl's proposition can be considered as one in the growth phase. His arguments can be applied to a recent topic of whether one should trust in peer reviewers when they made their counterarguments against our encouragement in our well-built arguments. For example, a recent article from Henderson, Horgan, Potrč, and Tierney argues for a possibility of retaining confirmation of belief in a proposition against peerhood by means of epistemic phenomenology (Henderson, Horgan, Potrč, and Tierney, 2017). Additionally, Lampert and Biro argue that Richard Feldman's principle of hyper-evidence from reviewers is just wrong and cannot be counted as truly impartial between two sides of an argument (Lampert and Biro, 2017). In the same vein, Fantl might point out from his proposal that we sometimes should not pay that much attention with open-mindedness to the peerhood. However, according to my argument against the insufficiency thesis here, I would say that the feeling of insufficiency will not be strong enough for us to totally dismiss those reviewers. From my opinion, the total dismissal, and maybe with a rejection of one's academic point of view, is rather stemmed from 'difficulties' in understanding from the point of view of reviewers' counterarguments. In other words, the difficulties that one encounters would be stronger for that one to be more close-minded to reviewers in this case of peerhood.

The tenet does not sound new to some of us who are not at all open-minded to get into any debates. But it sounds rather new to some of us who used to be in trouble after being a third party with

his or her 'too much' open-mindedness in a compromise between a camp of theoretical proposal and its rival opponent's counterargument. I think that this sort of compromiser could receive some vantage points of not being too much open-minded to both camps after reading Fantl's proposition in the book. Therefore, it is worth spending time reading from the whole book because it is good for us to know that the other side of the truth of open-mindedness could finally and surprisingly be unconcealed.

## References

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