

Eduardo Díez

Denise K. Comer

English Composition I: Achieving Expertise

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Review: Coyle, Daniel. "The Sweet Spot". *The talent code: greatness isn't born, is grown; Here is how*. New York: Bantam Books (Random House), 2009. 11-29 eBook.

The debate between nature-nurture still open, and several authors (Colvin; Gladwell; Syed) offer different perspectives (see resume in Marshall), as the case of Daniel Coyle with his book *the talent code: greatness is not born, has grown; Here is how*. The first chapter of Coyle's book allows accompanying the author on a journey to many places around the world to discover the behavior, that seem like distinguishing to several characters with the common denominator of an unusual talent. Coyle displays also his claims on how to achieve talent within different areas.

The author tells he met Brunio, a soccer player with eleven years old from Sao Paolo, Brazil, also when he met to Jennie in Dallas, United States; "She is trying to hit the big finish, in which she turns the word time into a waterfall of notes," Coyle says referring to Jennie's play (13). Apropos Brunio's and Jennie's practice, the author gives lots of details and writes with enthusiasm, leaving a glimpse that is important the way both do it.

Coyle's concern is the approach on which those talented people are performing their practices to improve their development and he believes the secret is that they are doing so in an exceptional way; "Deep practice," as Coyle calls it. This training look like to lead them to learn

and move forward faster. The author rephrases to Björk, “. . . The more scaffolding we build, the faster we learn” and continues, “It’s all about finding the sweet spot . . . There’s an optimal gap between what you know and what you’re trying to do. When you find that sweet spot, learning takes off” (19). In fact, this is the basis for the responses that Coyle tries to find.

Coyle tells, as well, how the deep practice has worked in other areas, aiding to many people, as with the simulator of Edwin Albert Link (20-24) from New York, United States, that gave to the pilots the opportunity; “to practice more deeply, to stop, struggle, make errors, and learn from them.” (24). The latest sign is about Simon Clifford from Leeds, England, a soccer coach that after traveling to Brazil started a Brazilian soccer school based on *futsal*, a six-times more intensive physical action than the usual soccer preparation (28). Nowadays after 4 years¹, has already succeeded, with figures such as Micah Richards, who now plays for the national soccer team of England.

Between the lines of Coyle, however, are fragments that attract the attention, but differently than seen so far;

Deep practice is a strange concept for two reasons. The first reason is that it cuts against our intuition about talent. Our intuition tells us that practice relates to talent in the same way that a whetstone relates to a knife: it’s vital but useless without a solid blade of so-called natural ability. Deep practice raises an intriguing possibility: that practice might be the way to forge the blade itself. (19).

¹ Readers’ reference might be at most 2009, the published year of the book.

The author affirms that deep practice could be the way to overcome the shortage of innate ability. Coyle comes to contradict himself for the reason that he declared —nature— “Trying to describe the collective talent of Brazilian soccer players” (14), thus he launched an association between the talent and a Nation. While in the above paragraph, he states —nurture— that anyone involved in deep practice can achieve a sharp talent.

Although Coyle’s assertion is not categorical, the warning is that any causal association based on an observational study, instead of controlled experiments with isolated confounders, always should be avoided. In addition, any cause-effect or generalization should not be considered because of the limited scientific value of the evidence. There are rigorous examples to refer to (see Davids and Baker).

This review has shown the initial map by which the author will take us through the entire book, with a friendly language, tries to show his claims as sports coach in a book with pseudoscientist tinge. The given reasons based on three cases, Brunio, Jennie and Micah should be considered anecdotes and they are neither chickens of the poultry house from any university nor Everest size talents.

But, like any book, is worthy to be read and pleasant.

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