



TITLE:

"DAVID AND GOLIATH

UNDERDOGS, MISFITS, AND THE
ART OF BATLING GIANTS"

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Malcolm Gladwell says:

David and Goliath is a book about what happens when ordinary people confront giants. By “giants” I mean powerful opponents of all kinds—from armies and mighty warriors to disability, misfortune, and oppression. Each chapter tells the story of a different person—famous or unknown, ordinary or brilliant—who has faced an outsize challenge and been forced to respond. Should I play by the rules or follow my own instincts? Shall I persevere or give up? Should I strike back or forgive?

This is a book that everyone on planet earth MUST read, especially now, this very moment that a global crisis occurs at all levels. This book can inspire us all to confront with the “giants”—governments, powerful families, corporations—the global elite that tries to impose a reality which comes in contrast with human nature. Comes in contrast with the “Natural” way of living.

Malcolm Gladwell explores via the stories he quotes two main ideas:

- The first is that much of what we consider valuable in our world arises out of these kinds of lopsided conflicts, because the act of facing overwhelming odds produces greatness and beauty.
- And second, that we consistently get these kinds of conflicts wrong. We misread them. We misinterpret them. Giants are not what we think they are. The same qualities that appear to give them strength are often the sources of great weakness. And the fact of being an underdog can change people in ways that we often fail to appreciate: it can open doors and create opportunities and educate and enlighten and make possible what might otherwise have seemed unthinkable. We need a better guide to facing giants.

There is no better place to start that journey than with the epic confrontation between David and Goliath three thousand years ago in the Valley of Elah.

“Ancient armies had three kinds of warriors: Cavalry, Infantry, Projectile warriors/Artillery. Amongst Projectile warriors were also slingers. The Sling was of such importance in ancient warfare that the three kinds of warriors balanced one another, like each gesture in the game of rock, paper, scissors.

Goliath was heavy infantry. He thinks that he is going to be engaged in a duel with another heavy-infantryman, in the same manner as Titus Manlius’s fight with the Gaul. He thinks that they will fight at close quarters. David has no intention of honoring the rituals of single combat. David tells Saul that he has killed bears and lions as a shepherd and he does so not just as testimony to his courage but to make another point as well: that he intends to fight Goliath the same way he has learned to fight wild animals—as a projectile warrior. He can run towards Goliath because without armor he has speed and maneuverability. He puts a rock into his sling, and whips it around and around and around, faster and faster at six or seven revolutions per second, aiming his projectile at Goliath’s forehead—the giant’s only point of vulnerability. David was a slinger, and slingers beat infantry.

“Goliath had as much chance against David” the historian Rober Dohrenwend writes, “as any Bronze Age warrior with a sword would have had against an [opponent] armed with a .45 automatic pistol.”

Goliath's behavior is puzzling. He is supposed to be mighty warrior. But he's not acting like one. He comes down to the valley floor accompanied by an attendant-a servant walking before him, carrying a shield. Why does he say to David, "Come to me?" The biblical account emphasizes how slowly Goliath moves, which is an odd thing to say about someone who is alleged to be a battle hero of infinite strength. Why Goliath doesn't respond sooner to the sight of David coming down the hillside without any sword or shield or armor? There is even that strange comment after he finally spots David with his shepherd's staff: "Am I a dog that you should come to me with sticks?" Sticks plural? David is holding only one stick.

Goliath had a serious medical condition. He looks and sounds like someone suffering from what is called acromegaly-a disease caused by a benign tumor of the pituitary gland. The tumor causes an overproduction of human growth hormone, which would explain Goliath's extraordinary size. One of the common side effects of acromegaly is vision problems. People with this disease often suffer from severely restricted sight and diplopia or double vision. The attendant was his visual guide. Why does he move so slowly? Because the world around him is a blur. Why does it take him so long to understand that David has changed the rules? Because he doesn't see David until David is up close. And David had only one stick. Goliath saw two."

The very thing that gave the giant his size was also the source of his greatest weakness. The powerful and the strong are not always what they seem.

PART ONE: THE ADVANTAGES OF DISADVANTAGES

We take it for granted that the Big Pond expands opportunities, just as we take it for granted that a smaller class is always a better class. We have a definition in our heads of what an advantage is-and the definition isn't right. And what happens as a result? It means that we make mistakes. It means that we misread battles between underdogs and giants. It means that we underestimate how much freedom there can be in what looks like a disadvantage. It's the Little Pond that maximizes your chances to do whatever you want.

- We have a very rigid and limited definition of what an advantage is. We think of things as helpful that actually aren't and think of other things as unhelpful that in reality leave us stronger and wiser. But what we have to remember is that Underdogs strategies are hard!
- We all assume that being bigger and stronger and richer is always in our best interest. But reality shows us many times the opposite.
- Art played an enormous role in the cultural life of France in the 19th century. Salon was the most important art exhibition in all of Europe. If one painter was accepted by the jury of this exhibition then his paintings would be hung on the walls of the Palais. The best paintings were given medals. From the other side were the Impressionists. They had an entirely different idea about what constituted art. Their work looked amateurish, even shocking. Night after night, the Impressionists argued over whether they should keep knocking on the Salon door or strike out on their own and stage a show just for themselves. Did they want to be a Little Fish in the Big Pond of the Salon or a Big Fish in a Little Pond of their own choosing? They made the right choice-a solo show-which is one of the reasons that their paintings hang in every major art museum in the world. But this same dilemma comes up again and again in our own lives, and often we don't choose so wisely. Pissarro, Monet, Renoir and Cezanne weighed prestige against visibility, selectivity against freedom and decided the costs of the Big Pond were too great.

- The story of Impressionists suggests a second, parallel problem. We strive for the best and attach great importance to getting into the finest institutions we can. But rarely do we stop and consider whether the most prestigious of institutions is always in our best interest. Many times these prestigious institutions make us feel of overwhelming inadequacy. Students in an elite school-except, perhaps, those at the very top of the class-are going to face a burden that they would not face in a less competitive atmosphere. And that feeling-as subjective and ridiculous and irrational as it may be-matters. How you feel about your abilities-your academic “self-concept”-in the context of your classroom shapes your willingness to tackle challenges and finish difficult tasks. It’s a crucial element in your motivation and confidence. The Big Pond takes really bright students and demoralizes them. The Big Pond takes really bright students and demoralizes them.

PART TWO: THE THEORY OF DESIRABLE DIFFICULTY

So far in David and Goliath, we’ve looked at the ways in which we are often misled about the nature of advantages. Now it is time to turn our attention to the other side of the ledger. What do we mean when we call something a disadvantage? Conventional wisdom holds that a disadvantage is something that ought to be avoided-that it is a setback or a difficulty that leaves you worse off than you would be otherwise. But that is not always the case. There are also the “desirable difficulties.” Difficulties turned out to be desirable. But not all difficulties have a silver lining, of course.

- If we have to overcome a hurdle, we will overcome it better when we force ourselves to think a little harder.
- Dyslexia is a problem in the way people hear and manipulate sounds. Usually dyslexia is diagnosed at eight or nine. And by that point, there are already a lot of serious psychological implications, because by that time, the child has been struggling for some years. The peers in the classroom think that this child is stupid. The parents may think that he/she is lazy. She has low self-esteem, which lead to an increased rate of depression. Kids with dyslexia are more likely to end up in the juvenile system, because they act up. It’s because they can’t figure things out. It’s so important in our society to read. Can dyslexia turn out to be a desirable difficulty? An extraordinary high number of successful entrepreneurs are dyslexic-Richard Branson, Charles Schwab, Craig McCaw and many more. There are two possible interpretations for this fact. One is that this remarkable group of people triumphed in spite of their disability: they are so smart and so creative that nothing-not even a lifetime of struggling with reading-could stop them. The second, more intriguing, possibility is that they succeeded, in part, because of their disorder-that they learned something in their struggle that proved to be of enormous advantage.
- In order to succeed he uses what so called “Compensation Learning”: requires that you confront your limitations and it’s really hard in comparison to “Capitalization learning”: to get good at something by building on the strengths that we are naturally given. Compensation learning requires that you overcome your insecurity and humiliation that you focus hard enough to memorize words and then have the panache to put on a successful performance. Most people with a serious disability cannot master all those steps. But those who can are better off than they would have been otherwise because what is learned out of necessity is inevitably more powerful than the learning that comes easily.

- The idea of desirable difficulty suggests that not all difficulties are negative. Sometimes we make the mistake and jump to the conclusion that there is only one kind of response to something terrible and traumatic. There isn't. There are two.
- A surprising number of innovators and artists and entrepreneurs had lost a parent in childhood. Parents are essential. Losing a father or a mother is the most devastating thing that can happen to a child. Felix Brown, a psychiatrist, has found that prisoners are somewhere between two and three times more likely to have lost a parent in childhood than is the population as a whole. The evidence produced by Eisenstadt, Iremonger and the other, however, suggests that there is also such a thing as a remote miss from the death of a parent. This is not an argument in favor of orphanhood and deprivation, but the existence of these eminent orphans does suggest that in certain circumstances a virtue can be made of necessity.
- Courage is not something that you already have that makes you brave when the tough times start. Courage is what you earn when you've been through the tough times and you discover they aren't so tough after all.
- Martin Luther King was the overwhelming underdog. He had, however, an advantage-of the same paradoxical variety as dyslexics have or people with painful childhood. He was from a community that had always been the underdog. By the time the civil rights crusade came to Birmingham, African-Americans had spent a few hundred years learning how to cope with being outgunned and overmatched. Along the way they had learned a few things about battling giants. He knew that they couldn't fight racism the conventional way. They used whatever they had and they could. They did things that weren't "right". But we need to remember that our definition of what is right is, as often as not, simply the way that people in positions of privilege close the door on those on the outside.

PART THREE: THE LIMITS OF POWER

"It has been said that most revolutions are not caused by revolutionaries in the first place, but by the stupidity and brutality of governments," says Sean MacStionfain, the provisional IRA's first chief of staff. When the law is applied in the absence of legitimacy, it does not produce obedience. It produces the opposite. It leads to backlash.

- The same year the Northern Ireland descended into chaos, because of the Troubles between Catholics and Protestants two economists-Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf Jr- wrote a report about how to deal with insurgencies. They worked for the RAND Corporation, the prestigious think tank started after the Second World War by the Pentagon. Their report was called **Rebellion and Authority**. In those years, when the world was exploding in violence, everyone read Leites and Wolf. Rebellion and Authority became the blueprint for the war in Vietnam and for how police departments dealt with civil unrest and for how governments coped with terrorism. Its conclusion was simple: ***Fundamental to our analysis is the assumption that the population, as individuals or groups, behaves "rationally," that it calculates costs and benefits to the extent that they can be related to different courses of action, and makes choices accordingly...Consequently, influencing popular behavior requires neither sympathy nor mysticism, but rather a better understanding of what costs and benefits the individual or the group is concerned with, and how they are calculated.*** In Northern Ireland, the British made a simple mistake. They fell

into the trap of believing that because they had resources, weapons, soldiers and experience that dwarfed those of the insurgent elements that they were trying to contain, it did not matter what the people of Northern Ireland thought of them.

- When the people in authority want the rest of us to behave, it matters-first and foremost-how they behave. This is called the “principle of legitimacy” and legitimacy is based on three things. First of all, the people who are asked to obey authority have to feel like they have a voice-that if they speak up, they will be heard. Second, the law has to be predictable. There has to be a reasonable expectation that the rules tomorrow are going to be roughly the same as the rules today. And third, the authority has to be fair. It can’t treat one group differently from another.
- More is not always better. There comes a point, in fact, when the extra resources that the powerful think of as their greatest advantage only serve to make things worse.
- Wiping out a town or a people or a movement is never as simple as it looks. The powerful are not as powerful as they seem-nor the weak as weak.

There are real limits to what evil and misfortune can accomplish. If you take away the gift of reading, you create the gift of listening. If you bomb a city, you leave behind death and destruction. But you create a community of remote misses. If you take away a mother or a father, you cause suffering and despair. But one time in ten, out of that despair rises an indomitable force. You see the giant and the shepherd in the Valley of Elah and your eye is drawn to the man with the sword and shield and the glittering armor. But so much of what is beautiful and valuable in the world comes from the shepherd, who has more strength and purpose than we ever imagine.