

Failure is impossible:

A critique from the perspective of plot thinking

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1. Introduction

Failure, has been one of the great inventions of modernity. More than a vital circumstance or a stage in the journey, it has become a totalizing category, a sort of cultural and moral device that structures the way we conceive time, identity, and the validity of human journeys. Its logic responds to a rationality centered on purpose, on the achievement of clear, measurable, and predetermined goals. Under this framework, existence itself is reduced to a project that must be fulfilled; and those who fail to achieve it, those who deviate, those who do not produce optimal results, are marked as "failures." It is a mark that devalues, a judgment that closes.

This way of thinking about failure is deeply rooted in the modern Western worldview, marked by Cartesian dualism, economic calculation, technocratic efficiency, and temporal linearity. Life, viewed as a journey from point A to point B, is scrutinized through the logic of performance and control. Within this framework, deviation from the plan, unpredictability of the process, or failure to achieve objectives are understood as ontological errors, as unjustifiable interruptions of the desired course.

However, this perspective not only simplifies the complexity of life, but also excludes and marginalizes other ways of understanding evolution. From ancestral knowledge, decolonial feminisms, political ecology, and complexity sciences, a profound critique of this logic of failure emerges. It denounces its normative nature, its colonial and patriarchal roots, its performative power over bodies, trajectories, and subjectivities, and at the same time, proposes a new way of thinking; a perspective that sees life not as a single path, but as a network; that measures it not in results, but in connections; that does not fear wandering, but embraces it as part of the fabric of

 life.

It is within this context that this essay is framed, whose central purpose is to affirm, through a framework of thought, that failure is impossible. This assertion, which may seem paradoxical or even provocative in a world obsessed with success, finds its foundation in a relational, rhizomatic, and emergent conception of existence. Life doesn't unfold in straight lines, but in constantly re-forming plots. Every vital process is permeated by uncertainty, contingency, feedback, and co-creation. What appears to be a fall may be, in another layer of the fabric, a necessary fork, an unexpected opening, a fruitful transformation.

From this perspective, failure ceases to be an objective and universal category and is revealed as a cultural construct dependent on a specific epistemic framework. By denaturalizing its logic, the possibility of thinking from another place opens up; a place where life is not measured, but felt; where each experience is valuable in itself; where each journey, however deviant it may seem, continues to contribute to the great tapestry of existence.

In this essay, then, we propose an epistemological shift: a move from binary to complex thinking; from the machine model to the plot model; from the isolated individual to the being in relation. In this transition, we show how the idea of failure dissolves in the complexity of living. To this end, in section 2, we will analyze the modern genealogy of failure and its connection with instrumental rationality. In section 3, we will present the foundations of plot thinking as an epistemic and ontological alternative. In section 4, we will explore the rhizome as an image of the becoming of life, showing that every bifurcation can be fertile. In section 5, we will propose an ethics and poetics of recomposition. Finally, in the conclusion, we will return to the central thesis that, in a world understood as a living network, failure has no place, because everything is in the process of becoming, of weaving itself together again, of opening up new meanings.

Thus, rather than refuting failure from the logic of personal improvement or resilient success, discourses that continue to operate within the same paradigm they criticize, what is proposed here is a more radical rupture; a philosophical critique that dismantles the very notion of failure, revealing its structural impossibility within an

ontology of intertwining. We do not fail because there is no line that can be cut; there is only a weft that folds, twists, and is rewoven. There is no error that is not a learning experience, nor a loss that does not become a seed. On the horizon of weft thinking, life does not fail; life is always being rewritten.

2. The Genealogy of Failure: Modern Rationality and Teleology

Failure, as a modern category, is born from the rationalist and technocratic thought that consolidated between the 17th and 19th centuries. Instrumental reason, articulated by Cartesian cogito, British utilitarianism, and scientific positivism, established a vision of the world as a controllable mechanism oriented toward measurable goals.

Edgar Morin (2006) argues that this simplifying rationality "isolates objects from their environment, parts from the whole, the whole from its parts," and therefore prevents us from understanding the complexity of life processes (p. 13). In this framework, success becomes the fulfillment of objectives, and failure their negation. For his part, Enrique Leff (2004), in analyzing the hegemony of economic rationality over life, affirms that modernity imposed a logic where "instrumental efficiency replaced the meanings of existence with market values" (p. 47). Thus, anyone who does not produce, who does not perform, who does not achieve, is discarded as useless or unsuccessful.

But this view, although dominant, is not universal. It is, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2009) points out, the result of a "northern epistemology" that obscures multiple knowledge and ways of life (p. 21). In other words, failure only makes sense if a single narrative of what is valid, correct, and successful is accepted. Faced with this narrative, plot thinking offers an ontological dissent.

3. Thinking with the plot: toward a relational ontology

Plot thinking starts from a basic premise: everything is interrelated. There are no isolated entities, no closed processes, no single trajectories. The world is a dynamic interweaving, where each node modifies the whole. This view is not only poetic; it is profoundly epistemic.

Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1987), developed the concept of autopoiesis to describe living systems as networks that produce themselves in interaction with their environment. Life is not a line, but a constant reorganization. From this perspective, there are no failures, only structural reorganizations; "living is a flow of experiences that are continually configured in our relationship with our environment" (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p. 42).

From the epistemologies of the South, María Lugones (2010), introduces the notion of epistemic mestizaje and ontological disobedience as ways of resisting the rigid categories of colonial thought. In this vein, life is narrated not in closed oppositions, but in porous borders, in processes of translation and hybridization. Failure cannot be sustained within this fluid horizon; it becomes a narrative transformation.

4. The Plot as Rhizome: Bifurcations, Fertile Errors, and Transitions

Failure only exists if one starts from a rigid teleology. But what if there is no predetermined end? What if every deviation is, in reality, the emergence of a new trajectory? In this sense, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1980), proposed the image of the rhizome, a network without a center or hierarchy, where "any point can connect to any other" (p. 13). From this image, the thought of plot recovers the idea that every experience is inscribed in a network of meanings, which are constantly reconfigured. A project that is not fulfilled is not a failure; it is a fork.

Enrique Leff (2010), reinforces this view by proposing that complex environmental thought must recognize uncertainty as a constitutive condition of life. It is not about controlling processes, but about "navigating the forks" (p. 109). In this sense, failure is impossible; what we call failure is only the change of direction in a plot that never ceases to flow.

5. Ethics and poetics of recomposition: another way of inhabiting the lived experience

Denying failure is not denying pain; it is recognizing that pain also weaves. That loss is not emptiness, but transition; that everything we have experienced, even what was not as we expected, is part of the fabric of life. Morin (1999), proposes an ethics of

uncertainty based on openness to the unexpected. “Every action enters into a game of interretroactions; it can deviate from its ends, even turn against them” (p. 158). Accepting this doesn't mean resignation, but rather inhabiting life as a constant creation, where everything is braidable.

In Andean looms, errors aren't hidden; they are incorporated into the design as elements of beauty. In many indigenous cultures, interruption isn't a sign of rupture, but rather of dialogue with other worlds. Learning from error, narrating the deviation, re-semanticizing loss; this is the ethical path of trama thinking.

6. Conclusions

Throughout this essay, we have defended a thesis that, from a modern perspective, might seem provocative: that failure is impossible. This assertion, far from constituting a superficial gesture of self-help or discursive voluntarism, is based on an epistemological and ontological critique of the way the modern world has structured its understanding of existence, its values, and its life trajectories. The idea of failure, like that of success, is neither neutral nor natural; it is a historical-cultural product that has served to sustain an economic, political, and subjective order based on competition, linearity, and the exclusion of difference.

From a perspective of plot thinking, which is rooted in the epistemologies of complexity, ancestral knowledge, and relational philosophies of the Global South, this binary logic is revealed to be reductive and violent. Life does not unfold in straight lines nor is it measured by predefined goals. The living is becoming, an emergent process, a fabric that remakes itself with every fold, every error, every break. Therefore, the very notion of failure, understood as the definitive interruption of meaning, becomes ontologically untenable. Nothing fails in a world where everything reconnects.

This perspective transforms our way of inhabiting existence. It invites us to stop thinking of life as a race or a project that must be completed efficiently, and to understand it as an unending plot in which every event, including error, loss, and frustration, is part of a larger fabric of meaning. From this perspective, it is not about

"overcoming" failure or learning to "manage" defeats, but rather about freeing ourselves from the logic that produces them as absolute categories.

In ethical terms, this understanding demands a new sensitivity; an ethic of care, of patience, of deep acceptance of life's rhythms. It demands that we abandon the morality of performance and punishment and embrace a relational ethic where every experience, even the most painful, can be embraced as part of the life process. As Edgar Morin (1999) would say, living in uncertainty is not resigning ourselves to chaos, but learning to navigate complexity with openness, humility, and creativity.

Epistemically, this position leads us to a profound decentering; to recognize that our modern categories—failure, success, productivity, efficiency—are just one way of naming reality among many others. By decolonizing thought, we open up space for other knowledge, other narratives, other ways of understanding the world. In this context, the plot is not just a concept; it is a living metaphor for how to think, feel, and transform the world.

Politically, the impossibility of failure becomes an act of disobedience. In a system that ranks lives according to their usefulness, that punishes those who deviate and celebrates those who adapt, affirming that no one fails is a form of radical resistance. It means recovering the dignity of multiple trajectories, of lives that don't fit into molds, of territories that refuse to be exploited. It is also a commitment to environmental, social, and epistemic justice, where every human and nonhuman experience is a legitimate part of the grand tapestry of living.

Ultimately, the impossibility of failure does not negate pain, frustration, or grief. What it negates is the closure of meaning. Everything experienced, even what is felt as loss, can be rewoven, re-signified, re-woven with other threads of meaning. Because in the logical plot, life does not break, it folds, transforms, regenerates.

Thus, this essay is not just a theoretical defense; it is an invitation to weave the world differently. To let go of the tyranny of perfection; to honor the crooked paths; to make the wound fertile; to trust in the creative power of life, which, even when it seems to stray, never ceases to intertwine with other lives.

To say that failure is impossible is not to deny difficulty; it is to recover hope as an art of reconfiguration. It is to affirm, with the voice of many traditions, that everything we are, and everything we are, is a part of life. With our ruins, our unfinished dreams, our forks in the road, we are part of a larger fabric that has yet to be fully narrated. Because in the end, in this universe where everything connects, nothing fails; everything is a plot.

7. References

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