There is a crack, a crack in everything – That's how the light gets in *(« Anthem » Leonard Cohen, 1992)*

■ **Olivier Laval**

Abstract

Wandering with the client is undoubtedly the most beautiful journey to experience in a supervision session:
1. Based on personal experiences, the error sheds light on the shadowy areas of our personalities and allows our clients to grow in self-awareness.
2. If I am not allowed to make mistakes culturally, I may be tempted to be in control. What if comfort (in my habits, in my ways of doing things) was nothing but a way of not leaving room for error, for questioning?
3. Any "error" in the supervision relationship (misunderstanding, postures, etc.) can reveal an issue in the system being supervised. The error reveals a focus to work on.
4. Accepting errors in the system, as a self-regulating mechanism, is a non-intrusive posture from the supervisor.

To learn from our mistakes, we need to be aware of the tensions we are going through in these four fields: the personal, the cultural, the inter-relational and the organizational.

Listening to Leonard Cohen sings, I thought to myself: this is precisely one of the missions of the supervisor with coaches and leaders: to accompany them to see the crack, the blind spot: this will allow the light to enter and illuminate what needs to be inspired (in the coach/leader, in the client, in the system...) Let's see how mistakes, failures, and fiascos are/enter the cracks!

Based on my experience, client cases (Leaders and Coaches' supervision) and a matrix, I propose to share my wanderings with you (the etymology of the word error) and booties[1] (etymologically linked to the word failure). Suppose in your eyes, this article-testimony is a "fiasque" (a bottle surrounded by straw to try to hide the lousy wine it contains - the etymology of fiasco). In that case, I will happily exchange and move forward with you!

A few milestones in the wanderings and explorations that I propose: after presenting the matrix, I propose to focus on each of the dimensions based on practical cases before
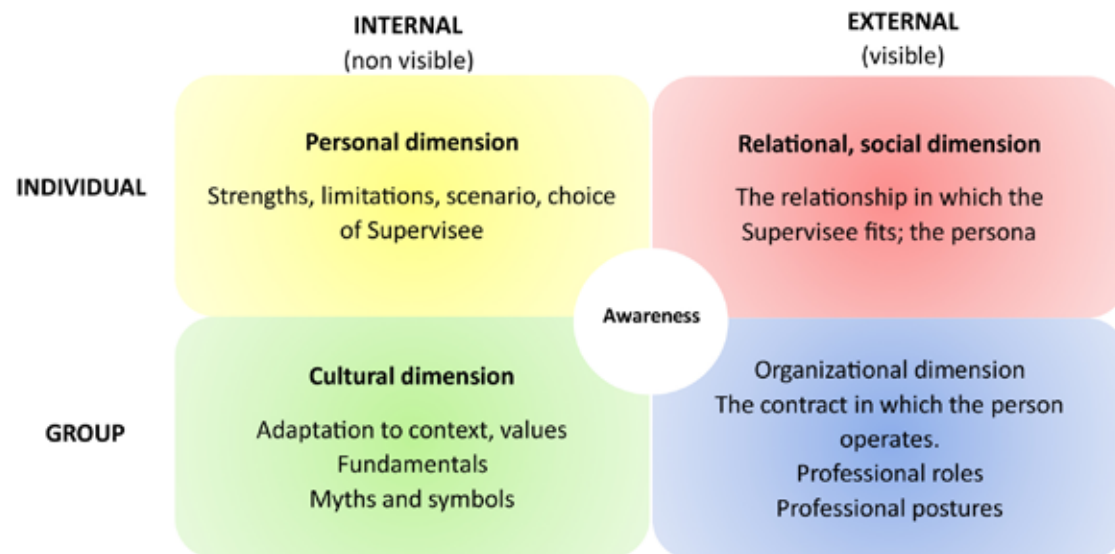
A tensional matrix to understand the accompaniment of a person in an error, failure, or fiasco.

Apuleius Matrix (©Jacques Moreau)

[1]In French Etymology of Erreur/Error is Errement=wandering / Etymology of Echec/Failure is butin/booty

concluding how the awareness of complexity can allow us to take mistakes into account, to learn, and even to unlearn thanks to errors and failures.

Jacques Moreau (TSTA Organisation) named his tool "Apuleius's Matrix" within his Tensional Approach to Transactional Analysis. It is a simple tool that allows us to understand complexity without trying to simplify it.

Let's take an example of a manager who told me during a supervision session: "I don't want to take up too much space". In a non-exhaustive way[2], let's see how the Apuleius matrix allows us to apprehend different paths of support or questioning.

At the individual level and in a non-visible way, this person supports this statement on history; he has developed a belief ("I am fine when I don't take up too much space") which has undoubtedly been helpful in his life and could be re-examined.

In what way is this belief helpful or limiting today?
At the individual level and in a visible way, this translates into a relational behaviour of constant smiling, of withdrawal in the relationship.
How does this behaviour impact his relationships?
At the group level and not visibly, this manager evolved in a « Jansenist[3]» culture where putting oneself forward

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is not valued. She landed in an international group, initially American, where successes are "stories to tell".
How can the transition from one culture to another create tensions?
At the group level and visible, this leader steps aside in front of members of her management committee and regularly hears, "Who runs the company?" or "We don't know where we are going".
How does her withdrawal impact the organization of her company?

Linking four approaches that could be taken in isolation allows global awareness. For example, how will my belief create tension in our relationships?
Changing the tensions between the dimensions will generate a difference if necessary.

What does an error or failure reveal as tension in each dimension of this matrix?
At the level of the individual and in a non-visible way - the personal dimension

What a supervisee said: "I just did an individual coaching session with X; she talked about her new job for the whole hour, and I didn't manage to get a contract. This isn't the first time, and I can't get it right. Where did my mistake come from?"

As a supervisor[4], I can have multiple analysis grids related to personality profiles, drivers, beliefs, etc.
In the first few seconds, I have this inner questioning, which speaks about me and my wish to be reassured by relying on the known. I welcome this questioning that I know about myself because I have been able to identify that it assures me, like a mountaineer who is going to

discover a wall; I can then launch myself into the unknown, the emerging, and I go on to wander. Let's wander together with our clients to help them see how the question they ask us speaks about them.
Going deep into the emergent process, here is one aspect of his work:
• Like his client, he was not looking to make a contract with me, and I told him it was ok: we could go off on an exploratory agreement during our early session.
• Following a long development to answer the question, "How does this speak about you?" I ask him where he is: "Well, nowhere!" I then offer him another rendition: "I, too, can't see where he's at, where this is going, and that's ok."
• The following question, "Tell me about your 'nowhere'; what is it like?" allows him to touch on a solid existential issue he can explore with his psychotherapist.

» The awareness of what is at stake in the error (in the example presented, it is an awareness of an existential issue; it could have been on another level using the parallel process etc.) is a learning process. Transactional Analysis speaks of the first ingredient of autonomy when there is awareness. To use Leonard Cohen's image, freedom is when I can detach myself from the problem, the error, and let the light pass. I accept to look at what the error illuminates; the wandering allows me to create a space between the problem and myself and show the flaw.
» What if, especially when his client talks about the error, the supervisor gave himself the right to error, namely "the right to wander"? It seems that this posture can favour being non-knowing and letting our client fully explore what he must explore in this fault that he shows us, that he dares to show.

At the group level and not visible - the cultural dimension

What a supervisee says: "During the last Mentor Coaching sessions with you, it was challenging for me! I've been doing this job for 20 years, and to see that I still have areas for improvement undermines my self-confidence. It's like a personal failure."

I propose here to address the cultural dimension of error. Let's see how mistakes are perceived in American, French and Inuit societies.
In his book Les "Vertus de l'échec", Charles Pépin[5] evokes the notion of "fast fail". Let us cite the example given by Pépin: the trajectory of two tennis players, Gasquet and Nadal. At 13 years old, the first one beat Nadal badly, in particular, thanks to a precise stroke (taking the ball very early, with maximum aggressiveness). He continued to win until he was 18. In the meantime, Nadal was working on a shot, a way of playing that looked strangely like Gasquet's in 1999.

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[5] Les Vertus de l'Echec - Charles Pépin - Allary Edition 2016 pages 15-17
[6] Example quoted by Jacques Moreau

We can hypothesize that Nadal's "fast fail" allowed him to re-examine his shots and his way of doing things.
This is a direct link with the culture in which the child, the adolescent, evolves:
When a person grows up in the United States, the child may be valued in class for failing, and the educator emphasizes risk-taking.
A friend who teaches at a music conservatory in France told me about auditions that could be experienced as failures, even fiascos (a term that is even more relevant here because it originally comes from the "fours" of shows given by Italian troops). She saw how the French system gave little room to valorise the risk of playing a piece in front of an audience but insisted on "no false notes" and guilt (the fault) of not being up to par.

Finally, in Inuit society[6], a child who breaks the ice is mocked. As this is a vital element (breaking ice puts one in danger of death), the mockery has an educational purpose for the whole group that witnesses it.

With these three examples, we see to what extent the society in which we grow up will forge us a glance at the failures. My personal experience of the error of failure differs depending on my culture.

With the mentor coaching example mentioned above, I became aware of another dimension: comfort. "I have been practising for 20 years". And, in 5, 10 or 20 years, we develop recurring gestures or postures, and it becomes difficult to question them. The gaze of a third party then becomes disturbing: it can reveal and highlight the motion or posture.

»   The culture of the person being assisted influences how they will experience the error and the possible feeling of failure.
»   Comfort can prevent us from letting the light of error shine through. Settling into a comfortable way of functioning, into established ways of doing things, can lead to a kind of control that does not allow for the emergence of error.
»   As a supervisor, what do I systematically put in place that I don't think is relevant to the question again? What can I regularly put in place during my supervision or other occasions to leave room for the flaw that will shed new light on these practices?

At the level of the individual and in a visible way - the relational dimension

A supervisee said: "I have been supervised in the past, and the problem was that the supervisor did not understand me, and there was a lot of misunderstanding".

My answer was: "I wish you to relive these misunderstandings with me, and I suggest you restitute them to me because what is happening here will offer decoders on what is happening in your professional life and possibly in your life in general".
Here we are dealing with the relational part of the matrix, starting with the accompaniment of a single person in supervision: the supervision sphere can be a space of failures, and from there, the supervisee will leave with a booty, the etymology of failure, for them and the accompaniment of the client.
What happens in an accompaniment is significant and can be questioned. "You indicate that I don't understand you: explain that to me. "How does this speak about you?" "About your client? About your team?".
I sometimes hear, "If I fail, I fail", which can become "I'm

a failure" or "After this work session, I told myself I suck at this job". I have frequently encountered this shortcut, this narcissistic flaw which certainly lets the light in but lets it in on a particular object: the ego. It is then a question of introducing an "alter" into the "ego", a reflexive space that allows for awareness.

While there are many ways to accompany this situation, I choose here to present two tools to accompany this vulnerability: the 3Ps method and the signs of recognition.

The 3Ps[7]   as:

A space of Protection to be installed to welcome the vulnerability thus revealed or perceived by the supervisor, an area of Permission to be developed, mainly from the supervisee to the supervisee himself which will generate a Power of accompaniment, new links that the coach can weave with his Power.

We can then propose to him to distinguish between a negative Unconditional Sign: "I am a failure", and a negative Conditional Sign: "When I made such and such a professional gesture, it had such and such a consequence for my client, and my mistake made me feel x, y or z". This approach seems essential when our client tells us about a fiasco, a failure known to all, which could even make the headlines, really or in a fantasized way. The spotlight comes from the glance of others, from what we could call the "reputation". Our vigilance is then that our client succeeds in naming what the relationship has revealed about the system (in what it was potentially a support of projection), what has been touched in him and, if necessary, invite him to take care of this wound with a psychotherapist.

Still in the relational part of the matrix, when I supervise a duo of facilitators (who intervene for team coaching or or-ganization coaching), the fact of observing their relational skills at the time of the supervision is a very significant entry point: I have in mind the example of one who takes much more space than the other. Mirroring what I observed, the one in the background said: "a bit like the HRM in the system which takes up a lot of space".

How does this duo of participants experience this during supervision? In what way does it give them keys to read for their accompaniment?

In this case, the one in the background lived it "in a comfortable way", and the one who talked a lot "did not want to be in this position: it is not my place to take over in a co-facilitation".

From these two observations, they were able to question their resonances (here, for example, the tension between "taking one's place" and "dominating"), their co-facilitation contract, and to make hypotheses for accompaniment around this notion of contract.

»   Supervision reveals relational failures, between the supervisee and the supervisor, between supervisees. This highlighting allows us to make hypotheses for our client and will enable him to make hypotheses for the system he is accompanying and the approach he is managing.
»   The supervisor, a watchman of a space of Protection and Permission, accompanies his client to find his Power.

At the group and visible level - the organizational dimension

What a supervisee says: "I am working in organization X, and it is not going well; it is not taking".

We have already seen above how the relational or cultural aspect could be linked to the organizational part of the matrix. What is played out during supervision can be a parallel process to what is played out in the system being supervised and thus give keys to the organization of this system, I propose to focus here on the "Organization of the intervention" part of the person being supervised.

Let us take up the autopoiesis introduced by Francisco Varela: "In the phenomena of life, there are not only spatial movements but also interactions with the environment, self-regeneration of damaged parts and even bodily self-transformations such as those that can be typically observed in vegetation"[8]

An organizational system can be approached as a self-organization that regenerates itself and sometimes remains for a long time in a dysfunctional situation. What is sometimes experienced as a failure by the leader or the coach can be understood as the strength of the system that resists any change coming from the outside, significantly when these changes affect critical elements of the system. The leader or the coach in this system can both try to transform the system from these elements while the processes of the system are at the origin of the very presence of these elements.

"It may become an element of the system to be respected, and it is a matter of accompanying the supervisee to deal with it, to "surf" on this element without trying to "make them move" because it is the system itself that will find the elements of its self-regeneration. The failure to transform becomes a success, respecting the system's rhythm.

"What if the system self-regulates in error?" allows us to avoid having a "project on" the system.

»   Accompanying a system requires a great distance from the traditional "tools" of accompaniment and a

[7] 3P and Unconditional Sign / Conditional Sign (strokes) are Transactional Analysis approaches.
[8] H. R. Maturana, F. J. Varela, Autopoiesis and Cognition, D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1980, p. 78-79. Quoted by Autopoiesis and the "individual" in the making. Hideo Kawamoto In Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger 2011/3 (Tome 136), pages 347 to 363

posture of acceptance of error as a process of self-regulation of the system. This process could be harmful to try to modify.

Do we learn or unlearn from our failures?

By choosing to evoke errors and failures through the matrix of Apuleius, as planned, I fail to be exhaustive, to show a whole part of the possible reflections around this question. By failing, I unlearn to be fulfilled if I control myself and am perfect.

So, my learning begins by unlearning what my drivers, beliefs, values, etc., can create as inferences.

How does this duo of participants experience this during supervision?
In what way does it give them keys to read for their accompaniment?

How are we supported in our unlearning? How are they valued so that they become learnings?
This involves studying our awareness processes: the central part of Apuleius' square.
I propose to illustrate this last issue with an example that we know well at Coheliance[9], the support of family businesses and, particularly, our speciality, the help of the transmission process of family businesses.

[9] my own firm www.coheliance.com
[10] Peter Koenig and the Process of Reappropriation / Peter Koenig System

The manager accompanied in supervision is generally led to discuss elements that are much more extensive than the company's perimeter, and they become aware of the different forms of transmission. For each form of communication, he can then build a risk map, the rational risks (potential legal, economic, governance failures, etc.) and the subjective risks (potential failures linked to conflicts, power, authority, loyalty, etc.).

Among the four types of wealth transmission for family businesses, family wealth, social and organizational wealth, cultural wealth linked to know-how, and emotional wealth, we will limit ourselves here to the first two and see the associated potential failures:

1. A family heritage: It is significant when the company bears the family name. Whether the company is old or new, the "legend" of its foundation has regularly been told at family dinners: an implicit pride is shared.
   The failures of transmission are often linked to the following:
   - For the donee, a "duty of loyalty" or a "conflict of loyalty" (depending on whether they want to take over the business)
   - For the other children, a possible feeling of jealousy
   - In any case, a significant risk of conflict between children.

2. A social and organizational heritage: with the company, it is the "status of leader" that is transmitted with all the symbolic elements linked to power, such as sometimes the integration in a particular club of leaders: Here, the symbolic loss of control can be experienced as a personal failure for the transferring manager.

If we supervise the manager wishing to transmit his company, we can see here how the four dimensions of Apuleius' matrix(es) potentially intertwine in a complex way:

Two matrices

The family matrix (the personal history of each child & parent, the relationships between them, the family culture, for example, explicit or implicit speech, the official or unofficial roles in the organization of the family) and the company matrix (in which we find part of the family matrix). Very often intertwined, distinguishing between them makes it possible to become aware of the issues that need to be untangled.

Projections

"It is certain that success is a lot of sweat. From this projection (success = sweat, effort), unlearning through awareness allows managers or children to detach themselves from the projections they may have made and thus reappropriate their approach to the company. Unlearning is then a process of reappropriating projections[10].

Symbols

The use of symbols (symbolium) to look at a failure together and overcome it will bring the different parties together. They can then overcome/unlearn what separates them (diabolum) around a new project.

Through this example, it seems relevant to accompany the leader to get out of the shackles (we mentioned above the comfort that can prevent wanderings and explorations), of the non-conscious learnings from history, education, relational experiences, etc.
All these awarenesses are relevant to avoid failures or find a ritual that will use a symbolic process in the case of failures. The ritual that takes on a symbolic meaning and that allows gathering again.

Ringing the right bells, those that are not necessarily perfect

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in

Part of the art of being a supervisor is to accompany the coach or leader in identifying the bells that could still ring or ring differently through awareness, to get out of the perfection and dare to enter the richness of the wanderings, of the flaw that will illuminate differently the tension experienced.
And why not dare to ring the bells of fiasco? Look how wrong I am, and it's okay! ■

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During 15 years as an Administrative & Financial Manager and/or HR Director, **Olivier Laval** has accompanied teams. Starting from 2009, he worked as an organizational coach before creating his company "Visions Croisées" in 2012 and merging with Coheliance in 2016.

Trained in didactic supervision and coach trainer for five years, he relies on everyone's potential. He is convinced of the relevance of "opening the lid of the pot" so that each person can, at their own pace, become aware of the ingredients that are inside and those that need to be added so that individuals and collectives function smoothly. While operating within a Transactional Analysis contract, he places a lot of importance on being open to different approaches and postures.
His clients also tell him that he has the art of confrontation that makes it possible to move forward: Coheliance has invented the neologism "Tensionaute", a posture and tools that allow coaches and leaders to identify virtuous tensions and dysfunctional tensions.
Starting in 2023, he will be a trainer in the Executive Supervisor program at HEC Paris.