

distract the others.¹⁰ (3) *The leader becomes a scapegoat himself*; if a leader cannot handle the situation and provide a container for anxiety, he or she may end up as a scapegoat. The scapegoat also functions as a container, but at the cost of being sacrificed for the (unconscious) purpose of containing a group's anxieties. Conscious, ritualized "sacrificial death is a bargain with the gods for the benefit of the community for which the sacrifice is made" (Krainz 1989, 115 [translated by the author.]). This paper focuses on the unconscious potential drive of groups to seek a scapegoat to contain their anxieties. The leader is not exclusively at risk of becoming the group's scapegoat, but the exposed position of leadership increases the likelihood that the leader, rather than another member of the group, will become the scapegoat. Another aspect of choosing a scapegoat is that

many groups and organizations have a »difficult«, »disturbed« or »impossible« member whose behavior is regarded as getting in the way of the others' good work. There may be a widely shared belief that if only that person would leave, then everything would be fine. (Obholzer & Roberts 1994, 130)

These authors refer to the biblical story of Jonah and the »popular explanation ... that all would be well if only the evil ones, the troublemakers, could be got rid of« (Obholzer & Roberts 1994, 129).

9.3 A psychodynamic perspective on the »Jonah« film sequence

We used the »Jonah« scene from the movie "Master and Commander" (Weir 2003 [1:09:20-1:22:20]) to teach the possible effects of anxiety in groups and how to deal with it as a leader. The characters focused on in this paper are Captain Aubry, Carpenter's Mate Nagle, and one of the midshipmen, Hollom.¹¹ The captain is the leader of the crew, and as such, has the highest rank on the ship. In terms of physical space, the captain has his own cabin. Carpenter's Mate Nagle is at the bottom of the hierarchy, and as such, he lives with the crew in shared quarters. The midshipmen are in a transitional position. They must sleep in the crew's quarters and are physically still a part of the crew, but they are also already in a higher hierarchical position than the other men. This situation has a high potential for distress. The midshipmen¹² must deal with the following four extremes:

1. The physical force they must face. If the rest of the crew were to turn on them physically, their chances of withstanding the onslaught would be minimal.
2. The principle of hierarchy, which gives them power over all the subordinate men despite their (relatively lacking) physical strength.

10 This is a very common way for leaders to shirk their responsibility to contain the anxieties of their subordinates. The scapegoat takes all the blame and relieves the anxiety of both the leader and the subordinates. An interesting movie that deals with the issue of a sacrifice provided by a leader to avoid responsibility is "Wag the Dog" (Levinson 1999).

11 For the corresponding cast of the movie, see the appendix 9.6.

12 The commander is under the same stress but has already learned how to deal with it by following a similar career path as a former midshipman.

3. Exposure due to their hierarchical position, thus serving as a projection surface for the crew.
4. Hierarchy that sets them apart from the other crew members, so that they are no longer an equal part of the crew, even if one or more of them still want to be equal.

The group of five is, at best, a protection for the individual midshipman. From a psychodynamic perspective, this transitional situation is something that all midshipmen have in common. When the group functions well, it relieves the stress of the individual midshipman, because others face a similar situation. Another stress reliever is attributable to the captain's position as the man in charge, which gives him ultimate responsibility and power over the crew. If the midshipmen are unable to assume their share of command, the captain has the final say in all matters aboard the ship.

The film sequence shows the emotional tension that arises within Hollom as he fails to understand the symbolic nature of leadership and the need to establish boundaries between himself, his role as leader, and the crew. He ultimately responds to the crew's and even some of the midshipmen's search for a scapegoat. Although Captain Aubry, Dr. Maturin, and Blakeney (another midshipman) try to help, Hollom gives in.

The sequence [1:10:10-1:10:55] in the movie begins with the ship stuck in the doldrums and all the men on the ship facing the threat of death. In a scene showing the crew at dinner, one of them, Joe Plaice, states, in a very dramatic tone, that something evil on the ship must be the reason for the evil doldrums. Analytically, these words make no logical sense, but they leave a lot of room for the imagination. Considering the context of the verbal expression, the emotional message is a hint that there might be some reason for the doldrums. The crew responds to these words with laughter, which can be interpreted as a means of releasing the tension created by Plaice's remark. Nehemiah Slade asks where this idea comes from, and Killick, another member of the crew, is the one who finally points to the biblical story of Jonah. Noting that the Bible is a powerful symbol and therefore lends some credibility to the argument, Killick goes on to say that, according to the Bible, Jonah, who offended God, caused »all the bad luck« on a ship. The scene ends with a close-up of the face of Joseph Nagle, one of the younger crew members, who has a thoughtful expression on his face. The next part [1:10:56-1:11:20] shows the crew cleaning the deck and Joseph Nagle talking to Nehemiah Slade next to him. Nagle refers to past disasters and acknowledges Hollom's involvement, arguing that "it is like Killick says."

This conversation between Nagle and Slade impressively shows how the vague assumption of an evil cause for the doldrums evolves into an explanation that there must be someone on the ship who has offended God and thus caused the doldrums. It is Joseph Nagle who finally identifies the evil in the person of Midshipman Hollom. Although Killick never spoke of Hollom as the evil one, Nagle declares "it is like Killick says," and casts Hollom in the role of the evil, recalling selected occasions as evidence. By telling this to the crew, a vicious cycle is created. Because one of Nagle's crewmates, Warley, died in a storm accident earlier [47:47-52:11], Nagle's aggression toward Hollom is heightened by the idea that the culprit for his friend's death has been found.

A psychodynamic interpretation of this scene shows that Nagle, as an inexperienced sailor, is vulnerable in his emotions and anxieties. He has probably not been able to fully grieve for his lost friend, and because of his inexperience, the death of comrades is not as

common to him as it is to the older sailors. Having already built up this burden of grief, facing the doldrums and unnamed anxiety of the crew, he finally relieves his tension with an aggressive action against Hollom. Although the cleaning of the deck is, from a psychodynamic point of view, an ordered action to help the crew get rid of their anxiety through physical exertion¹³, Nagle loses himself in his fantasies. In terms of depth psychology, he is caught up in a psychosis.

Nagle's aggressive action is shown in the next scene [1:11:32-1:11:54]. He barges into Hollom and does not salute, which is an insult to his superior. Hollom does not respond to this insult. Captain Aubry, observing everything, immediately gives the order to arrest and flog Nagle for his willful insubordination.

The psychodynamic interpretation here is that the captain did not see the individual Nagle insulting the individual Hollom, but rather saw a subordinate acting against a superior authority, thus violating the principle of hierarchy. As the highest rank in the hierarchy aboard the ship, the captain must enforce the principle of hierarchy. This is directly related to point 1 mentioned above. Hierarchy works because of the (sub)conscious¹⁴ acceptance of all the individuals involved. Once this acceptance is lost, the hierarchy ceases to function.¹⁵ Regarding this specific situation, Captain Aubry is filling the command vacuum created by Hollom's ignorance of leadership.

In the subsequent dialogue [1:12:12-1:12:22], Hollom says to Captain Aubry "I've tried to get to know the men sir, and be friendly, but they've taken a set against me, always whispering when I go past, and giving me looks."

These words express Hollom's view of the crew. They show that he is interpreting the men's behavior from an empathic position, trying to understand them and, most likely his biggest mistake, wanting to be understood by them as a human among humans. Hollom is incapable of understanding that his hierarchical position has a huge impact on how the crew perceives him, and on the expectations (imagination) associated with his position. This is related to points 2 and 3 above.

Captain Aubry tells Hollom that it is not about making friends and that "it's leadership they [the men on the ship, the author] want, strength, now you find that within yourself, and you will earn their respect. Without respect, the true discipline goes by the board" [1:12:57-1:13:14].

The psychodynamic interpretation of Captain Aubrey's advice is as follows:

- **Hollom should see the difference between himself and the crew based on his position as a midshipman.** This difference affects the social relations on board the ship and is beyond the control of the captain, Hollom, and the crew. The principle of hierarchy is the matrix to which everyone on the ship is accountable.
- **Strength and leadership should be the container of the crew's anxieties.** When questions arise within the crew, they seek answers from those in authority, whether this is done verbally or behaviorally, consciously or unconsciously. As discussed above, there

13 Also, the grog (alcohol) given to the crew should act as a sedative.

14 "Sub" is in parentheses because there are both subconscious and conscious aspects involved.

15 A massive attack on the established hierarchy on a ship is called a mutiny.

may be questions of fear related to technical knowledge and facts. These can¹⁶ and sometimes should be answered with rational explanations. A question like »Will we survive the doldrums?« might be an expression of anxiety, and so it could be translated as »We are facing doldrums and are afraid that they might cause our death, please give us hope and tell us that we will survive.« It is necessary for a leader to decide whether it is necessary to pacify or to explain, which is probably the most difficult decision a leader has to make.

- **The only possibility for Hollom is to find strength and leadership within himself.** This refers to the anxieties of a person in a superior position and how that person deals with them. There is no way to serve as a container of anxieties for others without having contained your own anxieties.¹⁷ Hollom's words "they've taken a set against me, always whispering when I go past, and giving me looks" [1:12:12-1:12:22] show that he is unable to deal with his own anxiety, and worse, that he is picking up on the crew's anxieties and adding their anxieties to his own. Hollom's psychological state is similar to Nagle's in that they both tend to lose themselves in fantasy. It is as if they are communicating on a psychological level. As Nagle identifies Hollom as the culprit, Hollom becomes increasingly disturbed by self-doubt, revealing a very interesting contradiction: C+) Hollom must contain his own anxieties and is therefore unable to contain the additional anxieties of the others. C-) By reacting¹⁸ as he does, Hollom becomes a scapegoat and thus a container for the anxieties of the others. Despite the hierarchical protection of the captain, who protects Hollom from being severely physically attacked, he eventually dies from his auto-aggression resulting from his inability to bear the tension caused by anxiety.
- **Respect is the acceptance of hierarchy without the need for physical force.** In a hierarchy, when superiors have to enforce obedience, something is wrong. This clearly shows that, in the case of a ship, the captain needs at least some respect from the crew, because the crew is used for physical enforcement and, reduced to physiology, the captain is just one man among others. Thus, "if true discipline goes by the board," uncoordinated physical force might instead dominate all the men on the ship. It may be that a mutiny occurs because the crew transforms anxiety into physical exertion through the medium of a fight. When the mutiny is over, however, the problem of coordination among the men reappears. Eisenstein (Eisenstein 1925) shows this problem of a lack of authority and therefore the lack of possibility to focus manpower after a mutiny impressively in his movie "Battleship Potemkin". From a psychodynamic point of view, hierarchy is a matrix that functions well only if a large part of the people concerned (sub)consciously accept it. Superiors and subordinates are therefore co-dependent, and the crew, as well as the captain, must act within a certain framework to ensure the proper functioning of the hierarchy on a ship. It is important, especially for a person who is in the situation of being trained as a leader, to recognize that "the individual seeking his or her own way must face the prospect of becoming a

16 Of course, this depends entirely on the technical knowledge of the leader.

17 At least when there should be no harm to the person who contains anxieties.

18 The focus here is not his suicide but his behavior on the ship before. Therefore, the scapegoating ends with the Hollom's death.

scapegoat just as the group may need to find a scapegoat in order to deal with tension” (Colman 1995, 5).

This was an interpretation of the »Jonah« sequence in the movie »Master and Commander«, directed by Peter Weir. Extreme situations, such as those presented in the »Jonah« sequence of the movie, provide an opportunity to discuss patterns of behavior within social systems. The “black and white” presentation, and the focus on a tiny, confined world of a ship in the middle of the sea, serve to concentrate the focus on the important aspects of the scene. In addition, the excellent display of emotion by renowned actors increases the chance that the audience will be emotionally touched by the presentation. This leads to the next point of this paper, which deals with how to transfer the artificial presentation into the training situation of the students and how to enable learning.

9.4 Learning by experience¹⁹ – an approach based on intervention science

The following arguments and conclusions are based on the perspective of intervention science (group dynamics).²⁰ Briefly, intervention science²¹ states that there is a benefit to self-reflection by individuals, groups, and social systems. The goal is self-awareness and thus a change from unconsciously biased to consciously chosen behavior. The advantage of self-awareness is that consciously chosen behavior is more adaptive, and affected individuals are better able to bear the decision they have made. Intervention science is primarily concerned with social processes, and focuses on individual, group, and organizational dynamics. Nonetheless, it uses transcendent knowledge, as well as reflection on immanent phenomena, to facilitate learning by experience. The design of a lecture on leadership is therefore a process based on the largely transcendent analysis of the »Jonah« film sequence and the facilitation of the reflection on largely immanent phenomena occurring within the lecture.

The analogue connection of transcendence and immanence is shown at the bottom of Figure 59. Although intervention science claims that neither a state of pure transcendence nor a state of pure immanence is possible, a distinction between transcendent relative to immanent states makes sense.

19 W. R. Bion discusses fundamental aspects regarding the importance of experiencing emotions and learning in the context of psychoanalysis in his book “Learning from Experience” (Bion 1962).

20 In this section, the terms “intervention science” and “group dynamics” are used synonymously.

21 See Part I.