

Spiritual-Holistic Inquiry Process Examples

This Page Not Intended to Stand Alone – See Main SHIP page For Overview

About the Methodology

The S.H.I.P. Spiritual-Holistic Inquiry Process was developed in the conviction that a holistic approach – one that considers the whole person and life setting – will capture important clues to wellness and wholeness that are helpful to understanding (and healing). Areas of inquiry can be thought of in three pairings: in/on/around, above/beneath, and behind/before. These pairings are easy to remember: simply consider the space around your own body. First, the space spiraling out from within you to on you and then around you. Then, a line that stretches from behind you and continues on to the horizon in front of you. Finally, a line stretching from the stars above you down to your roots beneath your feet. The seven prepositions we use – in ~ on ~ around // above ~ below // behind ~ before – relate to the following life areas: mind-body wellness, external role, connectedness // spirituality, roots // self-narrative, and outlook.

This S.H.I.P. methodology, originally developed for use in hospital chaplaincy, has usefulness that goes beyond that limited setting. We have imagined a few such areas, as examples. On this page, we explore how the S.H.I.P. process might be applied in various settings: assessing the individual (in this case, a Biblical character), an artist/work of art, and a city. While it would be possible to spend more time on each of the S.H.I.P. areas of inquiry, for illustrative purposes we are limiting the analysis to a simple sentence or two.

If you find the S.H.I.P. process to be of value, in any of these or other areas, we'd appreciate hearing from you.



Using the S.H.I.P. for Individual Assessment

The following completed worksheet shows how the S.H.I.P. can provide one additional framework for thinking about a biblical character when performing a biblical exegesis. Our intention is not to supplant your favorite methodology, but only to supplement or augment it.

Assessed Individual: Noah					
✓+	✓	✗	!	!!	(From ship shape to problematic)
	✓				IN Mind/body wellness.
	✓				ON Relation to role & responsibilities.
			!		AROUND Connectedness/support.
✓+					ABOVE Relation to the transcendent.
		✗			BELOW Relation to family roots.
		✗			BEHIND Self-narrative, personal past.
✓+					BEFORE Outlook, resiliency of hope .
<p>Notes: Noah was the biblical character who heard God’s voice and followed God’s instruction to build an Arc, populating it with animals, before the flood.</p> <p>IN: Noah’s mind exhibited strengths such as persistence and patience. He was strong and healthy enough to build an arc.</p> <p>ON: Roles included prophet, father, husband, and obedient servant of God. This last role must have been tough – perhaps that’s why he got drunk, first thing off the arc. Mostly, he handled his roles well, and was righteous in the eyes of God.</p> <p>AROUND: The people ridiculed him, and were not supportive, but at least he had his family (and all sorts of animals).</p>					





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ABOVE: Noah was close to God, lived in relationship with God, loved God, and was able to hear and follow God's voice.

BELOW: Noah was the tenth of the pre-flood patriarchs. The Bible does not comment on his thoughts about his roots.

BEHIND: The Bible does not comment on Noah's self-narrative about his personal past.

BEFORE: Noah had enough hope in his outlook to build an arc and bring animals aboard. [See Genesis 5:32-10:1]

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Using the S.H.I.P. for Analysis of Art and Artists

As with the example above, we offer the S.H.I.P. not as a replacement but as a supplement. The question is simply this: what insights might we gain from considering the humanity of the art or artist in a holistic sense, looking at various important areas of the artist’s life, times, and surroundings?

Assessed: Franz Marc (8-Feb-1880 – 4-Mar-1916)					
✓+	✓	✗	!	!!	(From ship shape to problematic)
			!		IN Mind/body wellness.
	✓				ON Relation to role & responsibilities.
			!		AROUND Connectedness/support.
	✓				ABOVE Relation to the transcendent.
	✓				BELOW Relation to family roots.
		✗			BEHIND Self-narrative, personal past.
			!		BEFORE Outlook, resiliency of hope.
<p>Notes: Artist Franz Marc was an expressionist painter and a contemporary and friend, of Kandinsky. The two were the primary agents of the Blue Rider (Der Blaue Reiter) movement — artists striving to express the inner spiritual and emotional state.</p> <p>IN: According to franzmarc.org, Marc suffered from periods melancholy and anxiety.</p> <p>ON: <i>Mixed (positive).</i> Roles include artist (co-founder of Blue Rider movement), son, husband (briefly), art professor, and soldier.</p> <p>AROUND: <i>Mixed (moving towards negative).</i> Marc lived much of his life well off, with good friends in artistic circles, but he had a series of stormy relationships, and he died a soldier, surrounded by enemies.</p> <p>ABOVE: Marc studied theology intensely, and even considered priesthood. He preferred nature, and came to use horses as a representation of the soul of things. In doing so, the number three seems to have been important, perhaps to echo</p>					



the trinity. Consider this trio of paintings: [Large Blue Horses](#), [The Red Horses](#), [The Little Yellow Horses, 1912](#). In his painting [Lenggries Horse](#), he appears to still have painted a group of three with an added horse, trying to join in. Even in his final, very abstract, horse painting ([The Stable](#)), three horses stand out apart from the rest. That said, Marc also created [various paintings](#) with one, two or four horses. Marc, whose paintings were warm, luminous, and inviting, used color to convey emotional and spiritual meaning. From that perspective, his last painting before World War I, "Fighting Forms," a clash of red and black, conveys the fury of war perfectly.

BELOW: Marc came from a comfortable family in Munich, with artistic parents and grandparents who were also deeply religious. His lineage was aristocratic. There is no evidence of strife between himself and his family.

BEHIND: Marc did not write an autobiography, and so his own self-narrative is not known except through his art and a few quotes.

BEFORE: Looking at Marc's paintings in sequence, one can [discern](#) a change of outlook, from ease to dis-ease, from beauty and [peace](#) to war and [discord](#). At the end, Marc's paintings convey an outlook of foreboding and doom. His [Long Yellow Horse](#) shows signs of starvation. From the time Marc painted his horses to the time he painted [Tierschicksale](#), also called *The Fate of the Animals* or *Animal Destinies*, his outlook changed completely from that which we see in his early works. The painting is tense, uncomfortable. Where the landscape had been peaceful, peace is now nowhere to be found. Marc was ultimately killed in combat, fighting in the war that he depicted so vividly.

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Using the S.H.I.P. to Analyze a City

Before applying the S.H.I.P. to San Francisco, we might ask: why would we analyze a city, at all? There are many different reasons, boiling down to one: urban planners, ministers committed to transformation, civil servants and others invested in a city’s future need to know where they are, before framing that future. It’s our hope that the S.H.I.P. will provide one additional resource, when working to gain an understanding. The analysis below is at a birds-eye level – civic areas such as the arts, financial structures, the media, and politics are not explored in depth. Still, it should be sufficient to provide a better understanding of how the tool might be used:

Assessed City: San Francisco					
✓+	✓	✗	!	!!	(From ship shape to problematic)
	✓				IN Mind/body wellness.
	✓				ON Relation to role & responsibilities.
	✓				AROUND Connectedness/support.
			!		ABOVE Relation to the transcendent.
	✓				BELOW Relation to family roots.
	✓				BEHIND Self-narrative, personal past.
	✓				BEFORE Outlook, resiliency of hope.
<p>Notes: San Francisco (SF) is an iconic American city that sits in Western California, on the peninsula between the San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean. Population: about 777K.</p> <p>IN: Mixed but positive. Iconic bridges and vistas. Ocean. Fog. Chinatown. Cable Cars. Public Parks. Lively and Fine Arts. And, most recently, a technology boom. At the same time, the City suffers the same ills of many American cities: scarcity of affordable housing, hunger, homelessness, addictions, and inequality. Mitigation efforts are lively, including soup kitchens, Project Homeless Connect, and so on. A diverse, highly educated, politically active, multicultural “body” of residents, many of whom use public transportation including Muni, Bart, and Cal-Trans. SF is not very bicycle</p>					



friendly.

ON: Roles include tourist destination, financial center, innovator, international hub, technology center, and magnet for free thinkers.

AROUND: San Francisco is surrounded by other progressive Bay Area communities, and has a sister city: Osaka, Japan.

ABOVE: Rebellious, often atheistic (with interest in alternative spiritualities). In the case of the LGBTQ community, there can be a painful sense of having been rejected by [Christian](#) churches.

BELOW: The City grew strong during the Gold Rush, but it has some skeletons in its closet, such as the treatment of the Chinese immigrants and Native Americans.

BEHIND: San Francisco's self-narrative shows a sense of being a survivor. Survived the Great Quake. Survived the fire. Little thought is given to history, before the Gold Rush. However, the land was home to Ohlone people, and was "discovered" by the Spanish, and then acquired by the United States in 1846, three years before the Gold Rush began. People prefer to remember the Gold Rush and the psychedelic '60s, for which San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood was a beacon.

BEFORE: San Francisco is optimistic, activist, and youthful. Its history of survival after quakes and fires bring a sense of resilience and hopefulness regarding what the future may hold.

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Using the S.H.I.P. to Assess a Cult

There are many lists of cult attributes available on the web and in books, and it may be useful to organize and present them in a framework that is easy to remember and apply. Below, these attributes are placed within the S.H.I.P. framework:

Frequently, Issues in All Domains					
✓+	✓	✗	!	!!	(From ship shape to problematic)
			!	!!	IN Mind/body wellness.
			!	!!	ON Relation to role & responsibilities.
			!	!!	AROUND Connectedness/support.



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			!	!!	ABOVE	Relation to the transcendent.
			!	!!	BELOW	Relation to roots.
			!	!!	BEHIND	Self-narrative, personal past.
			!	!!	BEFORE	Outlook, resiliency of hope.

Notes: No two groups are alike, and some attributes may not be present or immediately apparent. More information can be found on the web (e.g., [Cult Watch](#)).

IN: Thoughts are not free. Rather, subtle forms of mind control (you must believe a certain way) are typical, often introduced gradually with hype, deception, punishment/rewards and/or mind-altering techniques. Marked absence of open debate and dialog. Logic is flawed or eschewed, insider language and clichés or slogans may be used, and members seem unnaturally – and uniformly – happy.

ON: The larger cults have sometimes been labeled as such. If so, the cult itself will have ways to discount the label (e.g., telling you Satan is trying to dissuade you from joining). The label should be a red flag, a signal to do independent outside research. Member roles, behavior, and appearance may be managed closely. Also, the group may label itself as special or elite, and label other groups negatively.

AROUND: Potential members gain instant friends in a process known as “friend bombing.” There may be an atmosphere of fear or intimidation and polarized, us-versus-them paranoia regarding the outside world, as members are kept together, apart from their former relationships. Friendships can lack depth, as every member defensively hides true thoughts and feelings, for fear of falling short in the eyes of leadership, or being reported. Being told who to associate with and who to avoid is a common marker, as is a zeal for proselytizing.

ABOVE: Claims of exclusive access to the “truth” about God; everyone else is wrong. This is called exclusivism. Also, there may be fees and costs associated with “rising” to the next level, closer to Truth, the leader, and/or God. Often, a charismatic leader is placed above all else: a “false idol,” not accountable to any other outside authorities (unlike military officers, political leaders, monks, priests, and clergy) and not tolerant of criticism.

BELOW: May claim lineage with some great faith tradition, yet somehow to be the only wing of it that is correct.

BEHIND: The personal past of individual members is not celebrated. Instead, members may be encouraged to reject their past lives or may be kept so busy, in a process known as time control, they have no time to dwell on their past. The disconnect allows the group greater control of members. The past of the group itself may be presented as pristine.

BEFORE: The future may be painted as bleak, with doomsday end-of-the-world predictions. When the predictions fail to materialize, the beliefs may be changed, and a new scenario presented. Or, the future may be painted as rosy, as long as a member stays within the fold. Regardless, leaving is never celebrated, and those who consider it face the real prospect of ostracism, shunning, or reprisal.

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