

Merleau-Ponty on Habit With Possible Implications for Psychopathology

- I. A Focused Treatment on Merleau-Ponty's Habit**
 - a. Definition of Habit: Examples and Etymology
 - i. "[M]y body is the primordial habit, the one that conditions all others and by which they can be understood."¹
 - ii. "[H]abit resides neither in thought nor in the objective body, but rather in the body as the mediator of a world."²
 - b. Habit: Learning New Meaningful Skills
 - i. "Habit expresses the power we have of dilating our being in the world, or of altering our existence through incorporating new instruments."³
 - ii. "[T]here is not a single word or human gesture – not even those habitual or distracted ones – that does not have a signification."⁴
 - c. Habit: Uniting the Body to Receive the World
 - i. "Learning to see colors is the acquisition of a certain style of vision, a new use of one's own body; it is to enrich and to reorganize the body schema. As a system of motor powers or perceptual powers [i.e. habits], our body is not an object for an 'I think': it is a totality of lived significations that moves toward its equilibrium."⁵

- II. Possible Implications for Psychopathology: Four Tools from Habit**
 - a. *Humans are creatures of meaning.*
 - b. *The human body is habit.*
 - c. *Humans are fragile.*
 - i. The human dependency on the world "always shines through from beneath the others – just as the canvas shines through from beneath the painting – and gives the human world an air of fragility."⁶
 - d. *The human is a cohesive whole.*
 - i. We need "to treat the human subject as an indivisible consciousness that is wholly present in each of its manifestations."⁷

¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (London: Routledge, 2012), 93.

² *Ibid.*, 146.

³ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁴ *Ibid.*, lxxxii.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 154-155, brackets mine.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 307.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.