Psychology: Knowledge Organiser. Paper 2: Approaches

Origins of psychology

1879	**Wundt** opened first experimental psychology laboratory. Psychology emerged as a discipline & emergence as a science as some of the methods used = scientific.
1900	**Freud** established: psychodynamic approach. Highlighted importance of the unconscious mind on behaviour & developed psychoanalysis, which was the first 'talking therapy'.
1913	**Watson** and later on **Skinner** established the behaviourist approach. Believed all behaviour is learnt and that psychologists should only study observable behaviours (scientific).
1950s	**Rogers** & **Maslow** developed humanistic approach. Rejected deterministic views of behaviourism & emphasised importance of free will—focus on whole person (holism)
1960s	**Cognitive approach** emerged with the introduction of the computer. Interested in studying mental processes and believe we can make inferences about how the mind works based on results from laboratory experiments.
1960s	**Bandura** proposed social learning theory. He considered the role of cognitive factors in learning, drawing together ideas from traditional behaviourism and the newly established cognitive approach.
1980s	**Biological approach**—dominant approach in psychology. Advances in technology, for example MRI scans, allowed an increased understanding of the brain and biological processes.
2000	**Cognitive neuroscience** has emerged in the forefront of psychology. This brings together the biological and cognitive approaches and investigates how biological structures influence mental states.

Emergence of psychology as a science

1879	Wundt = first to show empirical methods could be applied to mental processes: emergence of psychology as a science.
1900s	Early behaviourists rejected introspection.
1930s	Behaviourist approach dominated; carefully controlled laboratory experiments.
1950s	Cognitive approach studied mental processes scientifically
1980s	Biological approach introduced technological advances.

Wundt and Introspection

- Wundt established the first psychology laboratory in 1879.
- Introspection: the first systematic experimental attempt to study the mind by breaking up conscious awareness into basic structures of thoughts, images and sensations.
- Structuralism: introspection led to identifying the structure of consciousness by breaking it up into the basic structures.

☺ Aspects of Wundt's work are scientific e.g. Use standardised procedures:
☹ Aspects of Wundt's research are subjective—participants were reporting 'private' mental processes: don't meet scientific criteria.

Learning Approaches: Behaviourist approach

- Assumptions: Focus on observable behaviour only, controlled laboratory experiments & use of non-human animals.
- Classical conditioning: **Pavlov** learning through association: conditioned dog to salivate (UCR) when bell rings (CR).
- Operant conditioning: **Skinner** learning via consequences—researched using rats in specially designed cages. Types of reinforcement positive and negative—both have positive consequence. Punishment = unpleasant consequence.

☺ scientific credibility: well controlled research & use of animals
☺ Real world application: therapies and token economy systems.
☹ Environmentally deterministic
☹ Difficulties in extrapolation from animal research to human behaviours

Learning Approaches: Social Learning Theory

- Assumptions: learning indirectly, in a social context through observation & imitation.
- **Bandura**: we observe others behaviour and note consequences. Behaviour that is rewarded = likely to be imitated = vicarious reinforcement.
- Mediational processes: 1. attention 2. retention 3. motor reproduction 4. motivation.
- Identification with role models = important.
- **Bandura et al 1961:** children who watched an adult behaving aggressively towards a bobo doll—were much more aggressive towards the doll.
- **Bandura and Walters (1963)** Children who saw aggression rewarded were much more aggressive when given a bobo doll (vicarious reinforcement).

☺Emphasises the importance of cognitive factors; overcoming issues with behaviourist approach.
☺ Real world applications: media.
☹ Relies to heavily on evidence from contrived lab studies.
☹ Disregards biological factors and their influence on social learning.

Cognitive Approach

- Assumptions: argues that mental processes should be studied scientifically e.g. memory.
- Inference: mental processes are 'private' so are studied indirectly by making inferences (assumptions).
- Schema: mental framework to interpret incoming information, become more complex with experience.
- Theoretical models: e.g. memory represented as having input, storage and retrieval stages.
- Computer models: programme computers to model human thinking (artificial intelligence).
- Cognitive neuroscience: scientific study of how brain structures affect mental processes.

☺ Scientific, objective approach to studying the mind e.g. lab studies and cognitive neuroscience.
☺ Many real world applications: depression, EWT.
☹ Machine reductionism—oversimplification
☹ Inference & artificial stimuli: low external validity.

Biological Approach

- Assumptions: everything psychological is at first biological and the mind and body are the same.
- Genetics: genes determine psychological characteristics (concordance rates) are used to investigate the genetic basis of behaviour.
- Genotype: a persons genetic make-up. Phenotype: the expression of the genotype (influenced by environment)
- Neurochemistry: thought and behaviour depends on chemicals (neurotransmitters) in the brain e.g. serotonin in OCD.
- Theory of evolution: genetically determined behaviour that is adaptative & is naturally selected.

☺ Precise and highlight scientific methods: Fmri and EEG.
☺ Real world application—the use of proactive drugs for mental illness.
☹ Provides 'causal explanations' but evidence comes from associations only.
☹ Biological determinism.

Psychodynamic Approach

- Assumptions: unconscious mind = important influence on behaviour.
- Tripartite structure of personality: id, ego & superego.
- Defence mechanisms: used by the ego: repression, denial and displacement.
- 5 psychosexual stages determine adult personality: oral, anal, phallic, latency, genital. Conflict leads to 'fixation'.
- Oedipus complex occurs at the phallic stage in boys, penis envy in girls.

☺ Influence and real world application: psychoanalysis 'talking therapy'.
☹ Untestable concepts—unfalsifiable
☹ Significant gender bias: alpha biased.

Humanistic Approach

- Assumptions: free will is emphasised & focus is the study of subjective experience of unique individuals.
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs: 5 levels: physiological deficiency needs, safety, love/belongingness, self-esteem and self actualisation.
- Self actualisation: person's desire to be the best the can possibly be.
- Congruence: personal growth aims for harmony between self-concept and ideal self.
- Conditions of worth: imposed by parents, may prevent personal growth.
- Counselling psychology (**Rogers**) genuine, empathetic, unconditional positive regard.

☺ Major influence on psychological counselling.
☺ Positive approach to psychology.
☹ Culturally bias.
☹ Limited real world application when compared to other approaches.

Comparison of approaches

Approach	Biological	Behavioural	SLT	Cognitive	Psychodynamic	Humanistic
Free will vs determinism	Biological determinism	Environmental determinism	Soft determinism	Soft determinism	Physic determinism	Free will
Nature vs Nurture	Nature	Nurture	Nurture	Nature & Nurture	Mostly nature	Mostly nurture
Reductionism vs holism	Biological reductionism	Environmental reductionism	Reductionist	Experimental reductionism	Reductionism and holism	Holism
Idiographic vs nomothetic	Nomothetic	Nomothetic	Nomothetic	Nomothetic	Nomothetic & idiographic	Idiographic
Scientific	Scientific	Scientific	Mostly Scientific	Mostly Scientific	Not scientific	Not scientific