Approaches
Psychology revision

Have you got the correct paradigm timeline?
Can you explain how each paradigm shifted its predecessor?

Terms you need to know!

- ❑ Internal mental process:
- ❑ Inferences:
- ❑ Schema:
- ❑ Fixation:
- ❑ Survival of fittest:
- ❑ Genotype:
- ❑ Phenotype:
- ❑ Negative reinforcement:
- ❑ Vicarious learning:

Psychodynamic approach

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Key assumptions of the Psychodynamic Approach
•Unconscious activity is the key determinate of how we behave.
•Childhood experiences have significant importance in determining our personality when we reach adulthood.

The Role of the Unconscious
The psyche, forming the structure of personality, has three parts:
•ID – driving us to satisfy selfish urges (i.e. acts according to the 'pleasure principle') (exists from birth).
•Ego - acts rationally, balancing the ID and the superego (i.e. acts according to the 'reality principle') (develops years 2-4).
•Superego – concerned with keeping to moral norms (i.e. acts according to the 'morality principle'), and attempts to control a powerful ID with feelings of guilt (develops years 4-5).

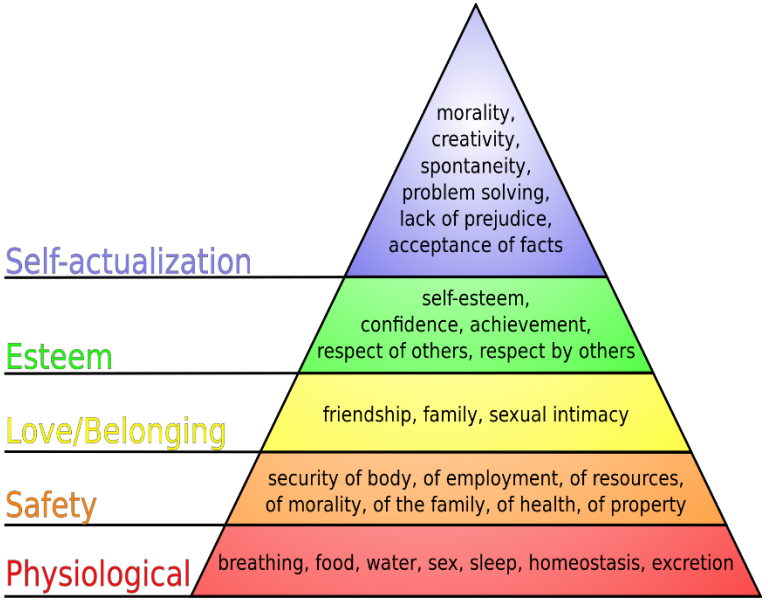
Psychosexual Stages
Freud also thought that humans progress through 'psychosexual stages', during the development of the psyche. He named five stages, each with a particular characteristic behaviour, e.g.: Oral – sucking behaviour (0-18 months)

Freud claimed that, during development, becoming fixated on one of these stages would restrict full development result in displaying specific personality symptoms.

Ego Defence Mechanisms
The ego balances potential conflict between the ID and superego, and tries to reduce anxiety. In areas of significant conflict, the ego can redirect psychic energy using 'defense mechanisms'. E.g.: Repression – burying an unpleasant thought or desire in the unconscious (e.g. traumatic childhood experiences may be repressed and so forgotten).

Humanistic approach

Humanistic psychology is an approach that emphasises the study of the whole person and sees people as being active in their own development. It is a person-centred approach, which views every individual as unique and regards personal growth and fulfilment in life as a basic human motive.



- Maslow: we have deficiencies that need meeting!
- Incongruence has a negative effect!
- Positive regard should come from unconditional love in childhood!

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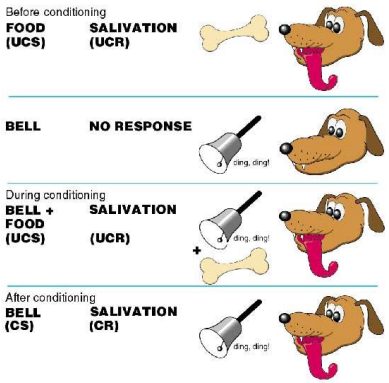
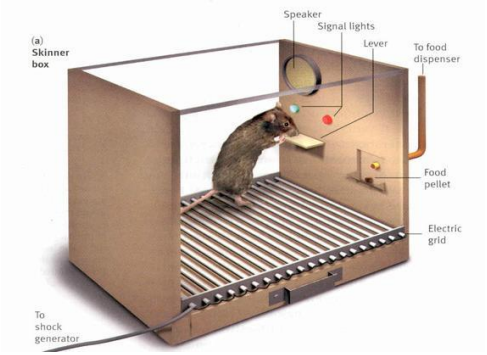
Behaviourist approach

Assumptions — The Behaviourist Manifesto
The major strength of Behaviourism is that its underlying assumptions are very clear :

•To be like other sciences, Psychology should only study **observable, quantifiable behaviour**
•The subject matter of Psychology should be the laws that predict how behaviour changes and can be controlled — classical and operant conditioning
•Humans are only animals and should not be treated as any more complex
•Because humans are only animals, research on animal behaviour will be directly relevant to humans.



Classical conditioning: associations between stimulus and response



Operant conditioning: learning through outcomes and reinforcements

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Cognitive approach

The cognitive approach assumes:
•The mind actively processes information from our senses (touch, taste etc.).
•Between stimulus and response are complex mental processes, which can be studied scientifically.
•Humans can be seen as data processing systems.
•The workings of a computer and the human mind are alike – they encode and store information, and they have outputs.

Theoretical and computer models are proposed to attempt to explain and infer information about mental processes. For example, the **Information-Processing Model** describes the mind as if a computer, in terms of the relationship between incoming information to be encoded (from the senses), manipulating this mentally (e.g. storage, a decision), and consequently directing an output (e.g. a behaviour, emotion).

The role of Schema
A key concept to the approach is the schema, an internal 'script' for how to act or what to expect from a given situation. For example, gender schemas assume how males/females behave and how is best to respond accordingly, e.g. a child may assume that all boys enjoy playing football. Schemas are like stereotypes, and alter mental processing of incoming information; their role in eyewitness testimony can be negative, as what somebody expects to see may distort their memory of was actually witnessed.

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Biological approach

Key assumptions of the biological approach:
•There is a direct correlation between brain activity and cognition
•Biochemical imbalances can affect behaviour
•Brain physiology can affect behaviour
•Behaviour can be inherited (as it is determined by genetic information)

Evolution and the genetic basis of behaviour
Charles Darwin's publication – On the Origin of Species (1859) – described the process of **natural selection**; characteristics that are not suited to a species' environment will die out as it struggles to survive, and with time will **evolve** over generations so that only **adaptive** characteristics remain in future offspring.

Nature-nurture debate
The **genotype** describes the genetic configuration of an individual, whereas **phenotype** describes the *combined* effects of genetic makeup and surrounding environment on behaviour. The **nature-nurture debate** highlights a key argument in psychology, over the relative influence of biology and environment on the characteristics of an individual; an extreme biological approach assumes that these are determined solely by nature.

Effects of brain physiology and neurochemistry
Interactions between regions of the brain help to control different functions, which biological psychologists assume to be significant in determining our actions. For instance, the occipital lobe is involved heavily in processing sight, along with the frontal lobe, which is thought to be involved in control and attention. (endocrine system relevant here too!)

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Social learning theory approach

- Behavior is learnt through experience
- **Observation and imitation of others' behavior**.
- Mediational process involved:
- **Attention**: The individual needs to pay attention to the behavior and its consequences and form a mental representation of the behavior.
- **Retention**: Storing the observed behavior in LTM where it can stay for a long period of time. Imitation is not always immediate.
- **Reproduction**: The individual must be able (have the ability and skills) to reproduce the observed behavior.
- **Motivation**: Individuals must expect to receive the same positive reinforcements (vicarious reinforcement) for imitating the observed behavior that they have seen the model receiving.
- Imitation is more likely to occur if the model (the person who performs the behavior) is positively reinforced. This is called vicarious reinforcement.
- Imitation is also more likely if we identify with the model. We see them as sharing some characteristics with us i.e. similar age, gender, social status as we identify with them.

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Wundt approach

- Considered the father of experimental psychology.
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- After studying medicine, he worked as a physiologist at Heidelberg University and later at Leipzig University.

- In 1875, at Leipzig University, he set up the first laboratory dedicated to experimental psychology.

- **In doing so, he separated psychology from philosophy and biology and became the first person to be called a psychologist.**

- Wundt's approach became known as **structuralism** because he used experimental methods to find the basic building blocks (structures) of thought and investigate how they interacted. To do this, he studied sensation and perception, breaking participants' observations of objects, images and events down into constituent parts in the same way that an anatomist would study a body trying to find its constituent parts and how they interact.

- At first he did this by studying reaction time - systematically changing the stimuli he presented to participants and measuring how long it took them to respond - inferring that the longer it took to respond, the more mental processes must be involved.

- Later, he adapted and developed a process called **introspection** to infer more about the nature of the processes involved.

Cognitive neuroscience approach

- **Cognitive Neuroscience emergence**
- This related field became prevalent over the latter half of the twentieth century, incorporating neuroscience techniques such as brain scanning to study the impact of brain structures on cognitive processes.

Evaluation of the cognitive approach

Strengths

- Models have presented a useful means to help explain internal mental processes
- The approach provides a strong focus on internal mental processes, which behaviourists before did not.
- The experimental methods used by the approach are considered scientific.

Weaknesses

- It could be argued that cognitive models over-simplify explanations for complex mental processes.
- The data supporting cognitive theories often come from unrealistic tasks used in laboratory experiments, which puts the ecological validity of theories into question (i.e. whether or not they are truly representative of our normal cognitive patterns).
- Comparing a human mind to a machine or computer is arguably an unsophisticated analogy.