

## Psychology: Abnormality - Notes for 10/10/03

### **Evaluation of Models of Abnormality**

#### **Biological**

- Evidence:
  - General paresis – syphilis caused insanity
  - Genetics, neurotransmitters
- Testing:
  - Does the disorder respond to physical treatments?
- Apply to all cases?
  - High success rate in curing
- Treatment successful?
  - Usually only relieves symptoms, not cure the disorder. Three types of treatment:
    - Chemotherapy – drugs
    - Electroconvulsive therapy – electricity
    - Psychosurgery – surgical procedures
  - Often unpleasant, permanent side effects
- Inconclusive evidence – no evidence that mental disorders are totally caused by biology. More likely that individuals inherit susceptibility but disorders only develop after stressful life conditions
- Ethical issue – patient plays passive role in model, not necessarily giving consent.

#### **Psychodynamic**

- Criticisms:
  - Influential – much of the understanding has been absorbed unwittingly into our culture
  - Too much emphasis on sex – over concerned with physical factors and little with social factors
  - Poor research evidence – theory based on observations of middle class Viennese women only – impossible to make generalisations
  - Ignores the present – treatment focuses solely on the past so present conflicts are often overlooked
  - Only suitable for certain people – relies on the person being expressive – young, attractive, verbally skilled, intelligent, successful – YAVIS
  - Highly subjective and not falsifiable – whatever interpretation offered by the therapist is assumed to be right
- Influential and controversial
- Experimental support is weak – no evidence at all
- Almost nil success rate – no evidence for it, plenty of evidence against it, but it's fun to study.