

Describe the Zeitgeist in American psychology in the first two decades of the 20th century - how did that promote and support behaviorism?

In the first two decades of the 20th century, positivism became part of the scientific Zeitgeist in American psychology. During this time, drastic discoveries began to occur in psychology. Significant changes were underway. There was no longer an agreement on the value of introspection, mental elements, or the need for psychology to remain a pure science. The functionalists were rewriting the rules. Their movement was evolutionary. They modified Wundt and Titchener by chipping away from the inside than attacking from the outside. The functional psychologist did not want to break from the past but to build on it. Functionalism was maturing while structuralism maintained a strong but no longer distinct position. At the beginning of the twentieth century, both positions were separated. The movement began, intending to destroy the older points of view. The revolutionary movement was called behaviorism, promoted by John B. Watson. Watson organized and promoted ideas and issues acceptable to the intellectual Zeitgeist. The major forces Watson effectively brought together to form his system of behavioral psychology were the philosophical tradition of objectivism and mechanism, animal psychology, and functional psychology.