

## **Édouard Claparède**

**Christopher N. Tirado, Lisa K. Lashley, Charles J. Golden**

**Nova Southeastern University**

Édouard Claparède was born on March 24, 1873, in Geneva, Switzerland. Claparède studied science and medicine while attending universities in Germany, and France. He later returned home and graduated from the University of Geneva with an M.D. in 1897. After completion of his medical degree, Claparède went to work at Salpetriere Hospital in Paris (“Claparède, Édouard,” 2018). There, Claparède spent a year doing research in neurology with Joseph Dejerine.

Claparède returned to Geneva after his year in Paris and remained there for the rest of his life. In Geneva, he joined the laboratory of his cousin, a psychologist, Theodore Flounoy. Here, Claparède became interested in animal psychology and began as a lecturer at the University of Geneva Paris (“Claparède, Édouard,” 2018). In 1901, he and Flounoy founded the *Archives de Psychologie*, a psychological research journal that he continued to edit until his death. In 1903, Claparède’s book, *L’association des Idées*, was one of the first writings to discuss the shortcomings of associationism, a theory dominant in the world of psychology at the time. His work at the University of Geneva and within publishing was considered exceptional, and in 1904, he became the director of the experimental psychology lab at the university.

In 1905, Claparède published his theory of sleep, suggesting that sleep is an anticipatory protection against toxicity. During the same year Claparède continued to publish works with his *Psychologie de l’enfant*, four editions of books associated with child psychology. Claparède later went on to serve as general secretary of the Sixth International Congress of Psychology in 1909. He was known to have attended all international congresses of psychology and became a

permanent secretary to formulate better continuity between congresses. During this time, Claparède also served as an associate professor of psychology at the University of Geneva and went on to found the Institute of J.J. Rousseau in 1912. The institute was created for the purpose of promoting child psychology and was considered highly successful. The institution later became affiliated with the University of Geneva in 1947, where in 1919, Claparède had cemented himself as the chair of experimental psychology.

The last 25 years of Claparède's career was spent publishing a series of experimental studies. In 1918, Claparède conducted a study showcasing a child's awareness of similarity and differences. His study found that children are frequently and continuously generalizing information or making use of similarities. From this, he created what he called his "law of awareness," that describes how an individual is unaware of functions that work smoothly in the individual and only become aware of it with aroused by conflict.

Claparède is also known for his influential experiment on short term memory. He demonstrated how trauma of a painful event could be retained if the individual's short-term memory was lost. The study focused on a woman who had been diagnosed with a form of amnesia. Claparède was known to greet her every day, but she could not remember his face. He tested his theory of trauma on her by hiding a pin in his hand and reaching to shake the woman's hand, who then was pricked by the pin. Afterwards, Claparède found that the woman could not remember him as usual but, when he reached to shake her hand, she was hesitant, and thus, he theorized that she recognized the threat from the prior pain while still having poor short-term memory.

This further assisted with the understanding that there are multiple memory systems used within the human brain. Among Claparède's achievements, he also developed the *Test of*

*Memory for Words*, the antecedent of the Auditory Verbal Learning Test (AVLT). This was a test consisting of one free-recall trial of a 15-item word list to be remembered. With this list, all words were attempted to be retained by the subject and then either written down on paper or said aloud to the examiner if the word is too complex. Édouard Claparède continued his exceptional work as a neurologist, child psychologist, and educator until his passing on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1940. His work in the field continued to create progress in the study for memory and child psychology.

### **Further Readings**

Boake, C. (2000) Edouard Claparede and the auditory verbal learning test. *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology*. 22(2), 286-292.

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