

The following text was originally published in *Prospects: the quarterly review of comparative education* (Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education), vol. XXIII, no. 1/2, 1993, p. 159–71.

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ÉDOUARD CLAPARÈDE

(1873–1940)

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According to the brief entry on Genevan psychologist and educational theorist Édouard Claparède in the *Thesaurus* of the *Encyclopaedia Universalis* (1985 edition), his work has been ‘somewhat forgotten’, even if in his own day he did have ‘quite considerable’ personal influence. A courteous tribute, but hardly an enthusiastic one. And yet between 1981 and 1984, Carlo Trombetta and Sante Bucci published seven volumes of Claparède’s previously unpublished works, with annotations and commentaries; a thesis on his work was written in France (Lyons, 1982); and two symposia were held on the relevance of his work for today (Rome, 1983, and Geneva, 1984). So there is perhaps some room for readjustment of this assessment.²

One might be tempted to say that the very fact of having been forgotten is, paradoxically, a sign of Claparède’s achievement, the positions he fought for having become so widely accepted in educational theory that there is no longer any need to link them to a specific author. But this anonymity is perhaps also due to the fact that Claparède’s educational ideas, rather than constituting an original body of thought, were the reflection of an era whose uncertainties have continued into our own. We shall therefore try to define the part Claparède played and the special contribution he made to the movement now generally known by the eminently vague expression of ‘the New Education’.

An eclectic controversial movement

It was from this apparent Babel of educational theory that the voices of the Genevan intellectuals, and of Édouard Claparède in particular, first emerged. Claparède made his very striking first contribution to the movement with the publication in 1905 of *Psychologie de l’enfant et pédagogie expérimentale*. Through a series of new editions, this little book gradually became an impressive treatise. But the tone of its author’s work was established right from the very first edition: critical and active opposition to accepted educational practice, and a call for recourse to science and scientific objectivity as a basis for a new approach.

But the opposition was also very vocal from the outset. They too were a mixed bunch, which faithfully dogged the steps of the successive generations of enthusiasts. There were also many adherents of the movement—which at the celebrated Calais Conference of 1921 became an International League—who gave vent to criticism and expressed reservations. Claparède himself was not backward in this respect. A considerable part of his authority within the movement was due to his polemical aggressiveness towards the ‘traditional’ school and to his exceptional ability to cut through the ideological undergrowth surrounding the concepts being considered and render those concepts ‘instrumental’. His famous 1923 clarification of the concept of the ‘active child’, which appears in his *Education fonctionnelle* of 1931, is perhaps the most remarkable example of this.

One might have thought at the time of the great leap forward in school education after the Second World War, and particularly during the major campaigns led by UNESCO during the 1950s and 1960s, that the educational tenets dear to Claparède had become irrevocably part of modern school education. But it is interesting to note that today, concepts of which Claparède was one of the main advocates are being called into question once more, in a vigorous, self-assured way and in a number of different quarters. Those concepts are being analysed, not so much as the result of a rational, reasonable approach to the phenomenon of education, but rather as the continuation of a mystificatory ideology which can be relied on, above all, to lead education policies into blind alleys.

This radical challenge is expressed, though in very different ways, by such writers as Neil Postman in the United States³ and Jean-Claude Milner in France;⁴ Carlos Lerena⁵ adopts the tone of a pamphleteer as he tries to identify the ‘convergences’ that are reflected in the discourse and work of the major international organizations:

Contemporary mankind was produced in a positivist, totalitarian temple in whose pulpit the most effective preachers were the ‘soft’ followers of Rousseau, not the tough Comtians. Or, to be more precise, the most successful sermon was that of the ‘childish childhood’ theorists, the gospel that of psychologism and the cult one of interpersonal relationships. [...] It was a sermon of Socratism and self-education [...] leading to a counter-sermon from the evangelists of that de-activated bomb which is deschooling, and so on, until we come to UNESCO’s technical discourse on lifelong education. All this leads us to see Rousseau’s hand in the building of this positivist, Comtian temple—Rousseau to whom the line always goes back, as to Kant.

That diatribe certainly gives food for thought, although its virulence detracts from its credibility before one even starts to examine it. And it makes today’s renewed interest in Claparède singularly relevant. For in a sense his principle of a ‘scientific’ understanding of human affairs was indeed a continuation of the positivist approach. Yet it was Rousseau’s patronage he chose for the founding of the Institute of Educational Sciences that was to give Geneva its worldwide reputation, and Rousseau whom he named as the precursor of his own functionalist conception of childhood.⁶ An effective childhood theorist, was Claparède one of the high priests of a pedagogy of childishness? Upholding the primacy of psychology, was this herald of the ‘Copernican revolution’ that makes the active child the centre around which the teaching-learning process revolves a zealot preacher of the ‘psychologist’ gospel?⁷

A citizen of Geneva

Édouard Claparède came from a line of Protestant pastors from the Languedoc who settled in Geneva after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. In a word, he was heir to the scholarly Geneva more than to the religious Geneva. A Calvinist by tradition, his Protestantism was closer to liberal thinking than to the ecclesiastical orthodoxy of mystical revivalism. It was, above all, a spirit of initiative and independence reflected in an adventurous individualism and strengthened by a multitude of consciously chosen and cultivated bonds of solidarity.

Because of his great admiration for another Édouard Claparède, his uncle, a zoologist of great renown and a convinced Darwinian, it was in the learned circles of Geneva that Claparède moved. Men like Charles Bonnet, the de Candolle brothers, Carl Vogt and Claparède’s uncle had built up in the city a strong tradition of experimental research, intellectual rigour, plain speaking and free commitment, and faith in the natural sciences and in nature itself above all. These men of learning were also important men in Genevan society. But their status as men of science enabled them to escape the worldly constraints of a city which, whatever its international vocation and cosmopolitan connections, was in many ways, behind its decorous façade, a narrow, cramping provincial town.

Claparède had scant respect for this side of Geneva. His first writings, in 1892, were already a critique—though a moderate one—of the education he had received at the Collège de Genève. But these youthful reflections on education, while they herald the pedagogue of later years, are as much the reflections of a ‘citizen’. That is what distinguishes Claparède’s voice among the chorus of voices in the newly emerging human sciences. And it is the citizen one finds again in 1898, drafting an Essay on ‘public opinion in its relations with reason and morality’, intended as a ‘work of psychology and moral politics’. Sante Bucci⁸ has commented at length on this unpublished work.

Psychologist or moralist?

But, as the 1898 essay shows, it is on psychology that Claparède pins his hopes for a reform of public opinion. Deploring the startling contradictions of collective movements, he refers, among others, to Gustave le Bon and his famous *Psychology of Crowds*. But he applies the same strictures to the privileged classes, who ought, in his view, given their level of culture, to be capable of overcoming the inhibitions and insidious social pressures, the what-will-people-say mentality and the hypocrisy that are typical of them and deepen their social responsibility.

Science is neutral, Claparède the psychologist insisted. But, along with many a contemporary adept of ‘scientism’, he remained convinced that, when all is said and done, the application of science to human affairs represents progress. And in his view the improvement is not merely an improved knowledge of humankind. One may say, as Carlo Trombetta does,⁹ that in the last analysis Claparède gives precedence to an ethics of social conduct, i.e. of the conduct of Man in society. And, along with everyone who has commented on Claparède’s work, one may note how eloquently his spiritual testament *Morale et politique* (1940) completes the circle, expressing the same concern fifty years on, i.e. that psychology can and must help us to invent a society in which integrity is not pushed to one side.

Life and works

Claparède, militant and man of science, has left us an abundance of writings, a body of work which had a greater influence on his era than the encyclopedia entry we quoted at the beginning of this article would suggest. There are over 600 publications between 1892 and 1940, striking in the breadth of their intellectual preoccupations and the combativeness with which these are asserted, their uncompromising moral vision and the wide range of social interests to which they confidently appeal.

Claparède contributed a generous scientific flow to the specialist journals of the day, writing on the most varied of topics—so much so that one may find him somewhat impulsive. But he always combined a lively curiosity with a methodical approach. He was thus able, for example, to touch on all aspects of psychology: he had the gift of asking the right questions, an entirely Socratic gift, and one which reveals the pedagogue described for us by his students at the Rousseau Institute. But he did just as much, expending a great deal of effort and time, to popularize educational ideas and bring them to the attention of the general public in a multitude of articles published in weekly magazines and daily newspapers.¹⁰ And, lastly, there are the hitherto unpublished lectures for which Carlo Trombetta has now brought us the preparatory notes, which display a powerful erudition and an eminently educative ability both to clarify a complex question and to bring out the problems in a seemingly simple one.

But the scientist was also an entrepreneur. Like the American John Dewey, whom he admired,¹¹ Claparède could not conceive of teaching educational psychology without establishing the minimum institutional infrastructure needed to apply it. The idea for the Institute of Educational

Sciences he set up in 1912 was certainly not his alone, nor even was he the first to whom it occurred.¹² But it was his constant concern that the teaching methods used in the institute should comply with the ideals it propagated, and that it should be a real workshop where the difficult job of aligning theory and practice might be worked through. Pierre Bovet, whom Claparède called in to direct the institute, has recounted the first twenty eventful years of this college of education that set out to be ‘different’.¹³ Seen through the rose-coloured spectacles of nostalgia, the enterprise is an exciting one, an Iliad or Odyssey of the new teaching methods. Much remains to be written, but one thing is certain: it was Claparède’s tenacity in the face of many constraints and vigorous opposition that enabled the great venture to get off the ground and to keep going.

We see the same tenacity in Claparède as the linchpin of the Psychological Internationale, until his death assiduously keeping the minutes of their congresses, and founding and managing the famous *Archives de psychologie*. This was how he tried to bring together that mixed bag of European researchers, cosmopolitan individualists and touchy nationalists alike, into an international learned society where rivalry would become emulation, personal conflict a confrontation of ideas, and an over-sensitive holding back of information, open co-operative exchange.

As a consistent exponent of scientism, Claparède argued for the autonomy and moral neutrality of the experimental psychology he helped to found, and as we have already seen, he regarded it as a lifelong duty to draw the attention of researchers to the fundamentally ethical nature of their task as men of science. He spelled out three requirements: intellectual integrity in research work; the responsibility of the scientist in civic affairs; and the collective commitment of men of science to counter the threat—and the tragically proven reality—of a return to barbarism. Here he considered it impossible to remain neutral. And it is fair to say, without seeking to dramatize the story for literary effect, that Claparède died on seeing the final collapse of his ideals in 1940.

An obsession with the ‘functional’

Perhaps we are now in a position to spell out the contradiction Claparède had to confront when he sought to found a positive, autonomous science and at the same time use it as a basis for action in areas where his most deeply held convictions were at stake. When he faces this contradiction, Claparède’s thought on education reflects the solidity and, at the same time, the fragility of its foundations.

As early as 1911 Claparède had laid the foundations for a body of thought on education which, right to the end, was put forward as the application of a ‘functionalist, biologist anthropology’: the human being was, for Claparède, above all something which ‘functions’. And the only way education could operate was by coinciding with this way of functioning, becoming one with it; instead of what was for many thousands of children the heavy, ineffective baggage, artificially added on, it should become the natural expression of their activity and development.

This functionalism is the central thread of Claparède’s thought on education, the key to his anthropology. In his *Autobiography*, published by Pierre Bovet along with the 1946 posthumous edition of *Développement mental*, Claparède points this out himself. To adopt a functionalist approach to psychological phenomena is, as Claparède says, to see them above all ‘from the point of view of their role in life, their place within the overall behaviour pattern at a given moment. It amounts to asking what use they are.’ And he continues: ‘After wondering what sleep is for, I tried to see what childhood was for, what intelligence was for, what the will was for.’

‘What is it for?’—the question seems a trivial one. But we should note first of all that it ties in with the necessarily utilitarian approach of decision-makers after 1880, when they began to invest larger and larger sums in education budgets and had to ask themselves how profitable that investment would be. ‘Profitability’ is not a term Claparède was afraid of. We are a long way, here, from ‘childishness’ and a ‘soft’ idealization of childhood. ‘Efficiency’ (*rendement*) is not, for him, a

negative notion in education. At the level of the study of ‘individuals’, he sees it as an essential component of any aptitude. For an aptitude only becomes manifest when required by an external situation imposing certain constraints on the subject.¹⁴ At the level of ‘social criticism’, Claparède reproaches the school system precisely for failing to get the most efficient output from the intelligences it handles, and for frittering away a nation’s intellectual capital. He illustrates this by pointing to the gap between educational attainment and measured intelligence: the most outstanding intelligences stagnate in school, as education is too geared to the mass of average pupils. Claparède never conceals his ‘elitism’, just as he always rejoices when less gifted pupils are brought up to standard.¹⁵

But this indictment of a wasteful education is a direct result of ‘his conception of this life of the spirit’. And on this point, Claparède’s two great metaphors are highly instructive. Robert Dottrens, who was the first primary school-teacher to receive his diploma from the Institut Rousseau and later became joint director with Piaget, sees in Claparède’s opening statement in the first edition of *Psychologie de l’enfant et pédagogie expérimentale* a theme on which ‘all subsequent works were to be in a way successive variations’: ‘That teaching must be founded on a knowledge of the child just as horticulture is founded on a knowledge of plants, would seem to be an elementary truth. Yet it is not recognized by most educators, or by almost any school authority.’¹⁶ Carlo Trombetta found in the margin of a lecture on *The psychology of interest* dated 1904, a series of clock-making metaphors which he compares to a passage in *L’association des idées* (1903):

Consider a chronometer and take it apart: you will find cogwheels everywhere. Break one tooth: your chronometer will no longer work; it will no longer be of any use or value. Does it follow that it is the cogwheel that makes the machine work? Not at all; it is actually driven only by the tension of the spring. The cogwheel plays a *mechanical* role; the spring plays the *driving* role, the *vital* role, as one might say if one put oneself in the position of the chronometer itself.¹⁷

So we find the spring ranked with the plant and allotted a ‘vital’ role, although of course metaphorically, if one puts oneself ‘in the position of the chronometer itself’. If we transpose this to the subject of education, we find the ‘Copernican revolution’ called for in the famous text of 1919:

Childhood has a biological role to play. [...] One must therefore study the natural manifestations of the child and make educational activity fit in with them. Methods and curricula gravitating around the child, and not the child turning as best it can around a programme decreed without reference to him; that is the Copernican revolution psychology urges on the educator.¹⁸

Two metaphors and a reversal have thus brought Claparède to the heart of the theoretical contradiction he has to tackle. On the one hand, his use of the horticultural metaphor is an invocation of ‘nature’ and its functioning—a functioning of a ‘vital’ nature, concerned with the essence of life. But what is ‘life’? A scientific study of the phenomena of the living must not fall into the trap of ‘vitalism’, which is a purely ‘verbal’ response, merely evoking the mystery of a hidden property, an unobservable principle. Vitalism cannot give a satisfactory answer to the only question Claparède considers of interest to the educator, the psychological question: ‘Why does it work that way?’

This sends Claparède back to ‘mechanicism’ and the description of structures: ‘How does it work?’ But does such a description allow one to take functions into account? No, says Claparède, stubbornly continuing to ask ‘What is it for?’ and refusing to see that this persistent question opens the way to metaphysics.

Neither mechanicism (since that is to refuse to wonder about such phenomena as the length of childhood, or interpret its utility) nor vitalism (which is to build fantasies around that interpretation); ‘Life is a succession of co-ordinated actions whose function is to adapt the

organism to its environment': the formula comes from Herbert Spencer and is quoted by Bovet with reference to William James.¹⁹

But as Piaget, with his usual sagacity, has shown, the commonplaces on which Claparède's functional education and psychology are grounded are those of his time. Spencer's evolutionist anthropology supplies the central notion of 'adaptive utility'. The pragmatism of James and Dewey shows him the origin of consciousness as a history of successive readjustments of 'action' to the requirements of the environment. And lastly Claparède shares with Bergson, for example, an approach one might call 'dynamogenism': every living thing, and the child in a specific way, has its own peculiar 'driving capacity': 'The psychology of the twentieth century,' comments Piaget, 'has been from the outset, and in all respects, an affirmation and an analysis of activity. [...] Everywhere [there is] the idea that mental life is a dynamic reality, intelligence a real and constructive activity, will and personality continuous and irreducible creations.'²⁰

Interest, a central concept in education

It is relatively easy now to understand why the notion of interest reworked in the context of this functionalist anthropology, occupies a central place in Claparède's psycho-pedagogical thought. He was not naïve: he very quickly realized the mistake he had made in the very early editions of *Psychologie de l'enfant et pédagogie expérimentale* (1905) in calling for an 'attractive' education. By 1911, he had readjusted his sights: from then on he preferred the term 'functional' education.²¹ Of course, his indignation at the plight of 'bored' and 'disconsolate' pupils in a 'life-crushing system that runs counter to nature' had in no way diminished. But interest cannot be reduced to a question of what is 'interesting'. Claparède saw it more through the popular expression 'you'd better, or else...' (*tu as intérêt, sinon...*), where there is perhaps a threatening, or at least a 'warning' note; it would be against the interest of the organism to fail to react in a certain way.

This is the well-trodden ground Claparède shares with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Nature knows how to serve its own interest: 'what it does, it does well, and it is a better biologist than all the pedagogues in the world put together'.²² Nature, and therefore the child in the natural state, knows its own needs, which are first and foremost to develop through action and growing. The child's interest thus lies primarily in 'play'. Claparède was to be the first to give full scope to Karl Groos' famous theory on children's play. 'What is play for?' asks Claparède the scientist, prosaically. The child plays because it is in the child's interest to play, and because he/she is therefore interested in playing.

In short, Claparède's functionalism as applied to education is a kind of 'economics' in which one can see, as it were, the foreshadowing of the modern systemic approach. Individuals in the ecosystem of their environment, driven by the dynamic of their own growth, feel 'needs' which make them turn towards their environment and are transformed into 'interest' which in turn becomes a range of changing 'interests', which become more and more complex as the individual interacts with the surroundings.

The consequences of this 'economics' as far as educational practice is concerned are, theoretically at least, easy to identify. Education is gradual adaptation, with the child's growth as the driving force. Childhood is useful *per se*. It is therefore crucially important not to rush the child through it. If interest is the mainspring of education, education is not primarily a question of punishment or even of reward, but of matching what is to be done with the subject that is to do it: discipline comes from within. A school must be active—a laboratory, not an auditorium. It must not make the child hate work. It is already a social environment, valid in itself and also constituting a preparation for adult life. The teacher is there, above all, to stimulate interest.²³

One has no trouble recognizing in this list the principles of the 'active schools' as formulated by Adolphe Ferrière or Pierre Bovet at the same time as Claparède, and as one finds them later in Piaget. But the particular characteristic of Claparède's contribution is the rigour—one

might almost say rigidity—of the ‘deductive’ reasoning which leads him to them. What we find in Claparède is indeed the theoretical construction of a biological anthropology applied to education, while at the same time one can identify most of the slogans to be found in the ‘era’ of New Education in the practical recommendations he draws from it.

Tough or soft?

The logic of Claparède’s contribution to the science of education is seductive. But is it not simply a scientificistic dressing-up of an ideology that dominated his era and has survived into ours? Alberto Munari²⁴ has recently argued that the conception of science that gave Claparède the paradigms for his work is more a continuation of approaches worked out in the eighteenth century than a precursor of those now emerging at the end of the twentieth.

Certainly, if one returns to the impertinent questions inspired by Carlos Lerena’s pamphlet, it seems clear to me that, even where he reflects the modernistic psycho-pedagogic tendencies in fashion among the Western middle classes in the first half of the twentieth century, Claparède has to be classified as ‘tough’ rather than ‘soft’, to return to our previous metaphorical categorization. Claparède is anything but a spineless educator rhapsodizing over the ‘child-king’. It is his anthropology that leads him to recognize childhood as a period in which foundations are laid, and to say that its level of efficiency is not very high. He does not confuse interest with pandering to whims. And for him psychology does not mean being a benevolent and sentimental listener, but a scientific undertaking that disrupts habits and inclinations.

Three main questions

For my own part there are three major questions on which I would distance myself from Claparède’s psycho-pedagogy, although they do not prevent me from admiring the example of the man and his work.

In the first place Claparède’s ‘venture’ is far from having borne all the fruit he hoped for. In particular, he did not succeed in bringing educational theory and practice closer together. In 1905 he was already levelling the most damning accusations at educational practitioners. In the purest spirit of Taylorism, he helped to strengthen the position of the experts, denigrating work in the field in favour of the laboratory where only the psychologists, raised to the level of experts, are credited with a correct appreciation of what is happening in educational institutions.

The error was at the very least a ‘strategic’ one. It alienated him permanently from the great mass of school-teachers and, above all, aroused the animosity of those in charge of teacher training, although a broad measure of support for the ‘active school’ had emerged during the 1920s. This ephemeral alliance was split by petty quarrelling in which Claparède did not always play the most attractive role.²⁵

But his mistake was just as much a question of ‘theory’. On the one hand, the subsequent development of educational research has shown that the idea that one could throw light on educational practice through a purely psychological approach was to some extent an illusion. If all the ‘variables’ that make a situation an educational one are to be taken into account, the interdisciplinary resources of sociology, group psychology, ethno-methodology, etc., must be brought to bear. On the other hand, the Taylorist model in which the outside expert is pre-eminent has been demolished as far as the rational organization of labour is concerned by movements of the ‘quality circle’ type, whose paradigm is precisely the reverse of Taylor’s: if they are given some encouragement and are recognized as researchers, it is the practitioners themselves who are best placed to improve efficiency. Paradoxically, this is a restatement, at the level of human productivity,

of the active school's principles. Too convinced of the expert's superiority, Claparède could not see the contradiction.

In the second place, it has to be recognized that Claparède's psycho-pedagogy stopped halfway. Claparède's contemporaries did not hesitate to draw attention to the very general, theoretical, abstract nature of the educational recommendations that arose from his functionalist anthropology. On the one hand, there has always been a misinterpretation which equates interest, as defined by Claparède, a biological driving force, with the facile, manipulative demagoguery of learning through entertainment. And it is not easy to identify those responsible for this persistent misinterpretation: the misconception is shared by the sharply critical and those full of unwelcome praise alike. Integrity, by which the honest Claparède set so much store, has here given way to misunderstanding. Why should that surprise us? 'Permissiveness' as a cultural deviation in Western educational relationships has carried far more weight in the development of ways of doing, thinking and speaking than did functionalism, an attempt at scientific interpretation so pathetically restricted to the groves of Academe.

Thirdly, Claparède's concrete proposals for improving day-to-day classroom teaching are quite incommensurate with the vehemence of his denunciations. In fact he was innocent of any teaching experience under normal, humdrum, work-a-day classroom conditions. His adversaries lost no chance of reminding him of this, even when their criticisms were made in good faith; one example is Gabriel Compayré, a pillar of State education in France, who supported Claparède when he founded the Institut Rousseau, but wrote:

What bothers us are the difficulties of application. When Monsieur Claparède comes to the question of how one might make certain difficult subjects interesting, he evades the question, he refrains from answering, he declares that this is a matter of the educator's art; whereas it would be most useful to be told how one might put some interest into studies that hold none in themselves.²⁶

It is significant that among the texts now published for the first time by Carlo Trombetta is the plan of a work entitled *Education et intérêt*, dated 1915, in which the aim is explicitly to respond to Compayré's challenge. But the only chapter that was written was a vigorous analysis of the 'disgust' and, more precisely, the psychological nausea induced by school curricula. The following chapters, which were to have shown some examples where disgust had been replaced by interest, were never written. Could they ever have been if it is true, as Michel Soëtard writes with such perspicacity,²⁷ that the message of a man like Pestalozzi is ultimately that: 'The very meaning of education and its application in teaching is based on the need to maintain a permanent link, *but a link across a yawning gulf*, between theory and practice'?

My last remark will deal with the co-existence of the psychologist and the moralist in Claparède's work and life. This has given us what one might call a 'psycho-ethics'. In applying biological functionalism to child psychology, Claparède broadened the base on which his educational approach was founded. For this psychology, in one sense, is no longer psychology. But if it has expanded, it has turned into a 'naturalistic anthropology'. Its key concept is that of 'adaptation' which, it has to be remembered, is 'theoretically infallible'—since nature cannot make mistakes about of its own interests—but is also 'in fact' in a state of 'chronic failure', since civilization, and the school in particular, has treacherously compromised it.

Claparède, ardent in his condemnations of the moral climate of society, lacked a real theory of civilization. Watching, grief-stricken, the rise of totalitarianism and the return to violence, he lacked a theory of barbarism, that 'essential barbarism' of which Pestalozzi was already defining the 'function' within society: 'The barbarism in which men live is nothing other than a consequence of nature's aspiration to culture.'²⁸

Calling on Rousseau only to construct a psychological theory, Claparède launches his attempt at reforming human relations in the name of a good and reasonable Nature. It does not

occur to him that the human being might be defined in terms of artifice and ‘original’ denaturing. We may compare him for a moment to his contemporary, Freud, as does Mireille Cifali.²⁹ Claparède actually proposed that what Freud called ‘libido’ could be equated with ‘interest’. Freud did not accept the proposition. And rightly so, for he could not subscribe to Claparedian economics, obsessed as he was by the notion of artifice as the key factor in the process of human civilization and an over-riding assumption of death and violence, with no place for the restoration of a ‘good’ nature, functioning harmoniously and evolving by itself. Claparède’s ‘need’, a full life in search of a functional addition to life, could not be confused with Freud’s ‘desire’, a hollow life on parole from death. Can an anthropological theory be anything but romance and drama? One may not share Freud’s convictions and one may find the last word on the relationship between civilization and violence elsewhere. But he did nevertheless take the only interpretive path which can give expression to life—the path which includes life in death.

Claparède, trapped in the closed circle of an over-simplified self-adapting system, could not offer education a valid theory of the will. Samuel Roller, one of his most fervent disciples, has admirably demonstrated the limitations of Claparède’s contribution on this essential educational point. Will is beyond the reach of the functional. The moment the will comes into its own, writes Roller,³⁰ can only be a ‘heroic moment’. The ‘joy’ that stems from it cannot be reduced to the satisfaction that regulates a need. Joy, that face-to-face with death, is joy. No more and no less.

Notes

1. Daniel Hameline (France). Professor of educational sciences at the University of Geneva and president of the archives of the Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Geneva). He was formerly a teacher at the Institut Catholique de Paris and at the Université de Paris-Dauphine. He is the author of numerous articles and books, among which we may mention: *La liberté d’apprendre* [Freedom to learn] (with others, 1967 and 1977); *Le domestique et l’affranchi: essai sur la tutelle scolaire* [The servant and the freeman: an essay on tutoring] (1977); *Les objectifs pédagogiques en formation initiale et en formation continue* [Educational objectives in initial training and recurrent training] (10th ed., 1992); *Courants et contre-courants dans la pédagogie contemporaine* [Trends and counter-trends in modern teaching] (1986); *L’éducation, ses images et son propos* [Education: its images and intents] (1986). He is also the author of articles on ‘Education’, ‘The philosophy of education’, ‘The history of education’, ‘Evaluation’, ‘Pedagogy: contemporary problems’ in the *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, 1985 edition, and forty-six articles in *Dictionnaire de psychologie* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1991).
2. Édouard Claparède, *Inediti psicologici*, ed. by Carlo Trombetta, 6 vols., Rome, Bulzoni, 1981, 1982; Édouard Claparède, *Inediti psicologici*, saggio, introduzioni e note di Sante Bucci, Perugia, Università degli Studi, 1984; Serge Rogowski, *La fonction de l’éducation dans la pensée d’Édouard Claparède*, Lyons, University of Lyons II, 1982 (Doctoral thesis); Proceedings of the Rome (1983) and Geneva (1984) symposia, special issue of *Studi di psicologia dell’Educazione*, 1984, no. 3. Three less recent publications may also be noted: Alfred Berchtold, *Centenaire de la naissance d’Édouard Claparède*, Geneva, Faculté de psychologie et les sciences de l’éducation (FPSE), 1973; ‘Trois pionniers de l’éducation nouvelle: É. Claparède, H. Wallon, H. Bouchet’, *Le Binet Simon—Bulletin de la société Alfred Binet et Théodore Simon* (Lyons), 1973, no. 73, p. 242–304. (Special issue); *Edouard Claparède*, OMEP national day, Paris, 1976, proceedings published by the Comité Français pour l’Éducation Pré-scolaire, Paris, 1976.
3. Neil Postman, *Teaching as a conserving activity*, New York, Delacorte Press, 1979.
4. Jean-Claude Milner, *De l’école*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1983.
5. Quoted by Antonio Novoa, *La professionalisation des enseignants au Portugal*, Geneva, 1986. (Doctoral thesis.)
6. Cf. Édouard Claparède, *L’éducation fonctionnelle*, Neuchâtel; Paris, Delachaux & Niestlé, 1931, p. 97–136.
7. George Snyders has been reviewing trends stemming from the New Education from a Marxist standpoint for over twenty years. George Snyders, *Pédagogie progressiste*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1971; and *Où vont les pédagogies non-directives?*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1973.
8. *Inediti pedagogici*, op.cit., p. 5–15. Some penetrating views of ‘Édouard Claparède and his times’ had already been developed by Alfred Berchtold in *Centenaire de la naissance d’Édouard Claparède*, op. cit., p. 78–96.

9. *Inediti psicologici*, op. cit., vol. I, p. 45.
10. These articles have been published together in the three editions of *Causeries psychologiques*, Geneva, Naville, 1933, 1935 and 1937.
11. In 1913 Claparède wrote a long preface to a translation of several articles by John Dewey published under the title *L'école et l'enfant*, 7th ed., Neuchâtel; Paris, Delachaux & Niestlé, 1967.
12. In 1911, Maurice Millioud had put forward to the Lausanne Faculty of Literature a project which was to inspire the work of the Genevan intellectuals.
13. Cf. Pierre Bovet, *Vingt ans de vie, l'Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau de 1912 à 1932*, Neuchâtel; Paris, Delachaux & Niestlé, 1932.
14. In: Édouard Claparède, *Comment diagnostiquer les aptitudes chez les écoliers*, Paris, Flammarion, 1923, p. 29 ff.
15. Cf. Édouard Claparède, 'Succès scolaire et intelligence', *Journal de Genève*, 21 March 1935; In: *Causeries psychologiques* (Geneva, Naville), 1937, 3rd series, p. 10–15.
16. In: Édouard Claparède, *Psychologie de l'enfant et pédagogie expérimentale*, 6th ed., Geneva; Paris, Kündig & Fischbascher, 1916, p. 1.
17. Quoted by C. Trombetta, *Inediti psicologici*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 34.
18. In: Édouard Claparède, 'Les nouvelles conceptions éducatives et leur vérification par l'expérience', *Scientia* (Milan), no. 35, 1919, p. 3–5.
19. Cf. Pierre Bovet, *William James psychologue: l'intérêt de son oeuvre pour les éducateurs*, Neuchâtel, Rossier & Grisel, 1910, p. 3.
20. In: Jean Piaget, *Psychologie et pédagogie*, Paris, Gonthier, 1969, p. 213.
21. Cf. Édouard Claparède, 'La conception fonctionnelle de l'éducation', *Bulletin de la société libre pour l'étude psychologique de l'enfant* (Paris), 1911, vol. 11, p. 45 ff.
22. In: Édouard Claparède, *Psychologie de l'enfant et pédagogie expérimentale*, op. cit. p. 487.
23. Adapted from Robert Dottrens, 'Édouard Claparède', *Le Binet Simon*, op. cit., p. 259.
24. Alberto Munari, 'Édouard Claparède: quelles sciences de l'éducation?', *Studi di psicologia dell'educazione*, vol. 3, Rome, 1984, p. 92–97.
25. Cf. Lisiane Millet, *L'instituteur vaudois en mal d'université: le débat sur la formation des maîtres primaires vaudois entre 1920 et 1930*, Geneva, FPSE, 1983. Cf. D. Hameline, 'Édouard Claparède, la force et la fragilité', Preface to *Inediti psicologici*, op. cit., L p. ix–xx.
26. Quoted in *Inediti psicologici*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 106–07.
27. Cf. Michel Soëtard, 'Le problème de l'unité des sciences de l'éducation: approche historique et philosophique', *Éducation comparée* (Paris), 1983, vol. 31–32, p. 130; *Pedagogica historica* (Gent), vol. XXI(2), 1981, p. 437; *Paideia* (Warsaw), 1983, vol. X, p. 117.
28. Quoted by Michel Soëtard in 'Éducation, (multi)-culturalism et sauvagerie essentielle: approche philosophique et historique', In: Wolfgang Mitter and James Swift, *Education and the diversity of cultures/l'éducation et la diversité des cultures/Erziehung und die Vielfalt der Kulturen*. vol. 1, Cologne, Böhlau Verlag, 1985, p. 93–106. (Report of the Comparative Education Society in Europe, General Meeting, 11th, Würzburg, Germany, 1983.)
29. Cf. Mireille Cifali, 'Entre Genève et Paris: Vienne. éléments pour une histoire de la psychanalyse', *Le bloc-notes de la psychanalyse* (Geneva), 1982, vol. 2, p. 91–130.
30. Samuel Roller, 'Édouard Claparède et l'éducation de la volonté', In: Berchtold, op. cit., p. 38–45.

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The most recent and most complete bibliography on Claparède's work was created by Carlo Trombetta and appears at the beginning of his book: *Édouard Claparède psicologo*, Rome, Armando editore, 1989, p. 11–13.

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Other than the works mentioned in note 2, there are the following two books:

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