

Book lunch speech
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REISS AS A FORENSIC SCIENTIST AND A CRIMINALIST

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Dear Publisher's Representatives,

Thank you for inviting me to this event, namely the release of a series of books dedicated to the life and work of Archibald Reiss.

As the current director of the school Reiss founded in Lausanne in 1909, I will concentrate now on volume III, which is dedicated to his scientific contribution. Specially, it covers the period he spent at the University of Lausanne, in Switzerland. I was happy to write a foreword to this book. In particular, we met in Lausanne with the people who designed this volume. I could appreciate their professionalism and commitment to the project.

A book is a beautiful object. I must admit that even in the digital age, I remain sensitive to the physical object itself. It concretizes these impressive efforts made by the whole team which has spent countless hours on this project.

This book is also beautiful thanks to the images it contains. Let us not forget that Reiss was a photographer at the forefront of technology of his day.

He was the Editor-in-Chief of two specialized journals between 1899 and 1906. In August 1903, he organized the third congress of the International Union of Photography in Lausanne.

He also ran a photography department at the service of the state and created the radiology department of the hospital.

Little by little, Reiss developed a specific interest in a particular kind of photography: the photography aimed at supporting investigation and criminal procedures. In fact, the images in the book are taken with the idea of investigating.

Hence, the form (the beautiful book well imaged) helps us to smoothly turn

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to its content. The book focuses on the integration of science and justice with the result of constructing a new discipline still named today in different ways: criminalistics, police science or forensic science.

Reiss was a little more precise about the delineation of his project. He rejected the too theoretical movement that was proposed by the Italian school around criminal anthropology (what has been integrated now within the discipline of criminology). Reiss wanted to remain down to earth. His discipline should remain useful to solve current and practical problems.

This sounds like a current movement that says that what is really important in a research is its impact, that is the positive changes it brings to society. This might be a return in comparison of how academic structures have focused the evaluation of their outcome during at least the last two decades: Reiss would probably have been relatively indifferent to traditional academic indicators such as a number of publications or a number of citations. He would have been much more dedicated to find other indicators for evaluating the real value of a research and its practical impact.

Another turning point is widely visible in academic structures, which goes again in the direction proposed by Reiss. Academic disciplines have developed in silos during the 20th century, building largely fragmented and occasionally unproductive structures along the traditional disciplines. Sociology, psychology, law, chemistry, physics or mathematics cannot alone provide significant progresses in the study of crime. The construction of transversal models

through interdisciplinary and collective endeavour is progressively recognized as a more efficient approach to solve practical problems.

A return to such a position has probably never been more important than today to decipher in an interdisciplinary way the digital transformations that we face and which destabilize our societies.

In this perspective, I would recommend current high ranked managers to read this volume about the scientific contribution of Reiss. It will help them take distance with academic traditions and fragmented, technically-focused visions that are still pervasive.

We must, however, give a warning, and a key to decipher the texts. As we know, the notion of crime is evolving with societies, cultures. Ways of addressing crime have changed dramatically over time. Reading the book hence requires making an effort in order to abstract from the very particular context of the beginning of the 20th century. If the reader makes this effort, he or she will be then rewarded by discovering the modern model that still grounds the scientific development of the School of Criminal Justice of the University of Lausanne.

This particular volume is finally one part of a whole. As often, the whole is probably much more than the sum of its parts. This whole has still to be discovered by reading the entire series of book.

Please receive my respectful congratulations for having accomplished the difficult task of having brought together such a great content in this beautiful series of books!

