Maastricht University

The danger of innocence : common sense beliefs and misconceptions about false confessions

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Propositions of the thesis

The Danger of Innocence

Common Sense Beliefs and Misconceptions about False Confessions

1. Common sense beliefs about confessions are often incorrect (this thesis).
2. False confessions are not a rare phenomenon (this thesis).
3. Misconceptions about false confessions put innocent suspects at risk (this thesis).
4. People are poor at predicting their own behavior in police custody (this thesis).
5. Deception detection research has shown that police detectives are not better than the average person at distinguishing between truth and deceit, but most people are not aware of this.
6. Wrongful convictions are a universal problem as they occur across the world, more needs to be done to prevent such injustices.
7. The advancement of forensic sciences has helped to make justice systems fairer for innocent suspects.
8. Educating law enforcement officials about misbeliefs concerning false confessions can help to improve the justice system.
9. Was immer du kannst oder wovon du träumst – fang damit an. Mut hat Genie, Kraft und Zauber in sich (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe).
10. As Galileo Galilei once wisely said, all truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them.
11. Albert Einstein rightly stated that we should not strive to be a success, but rather to be of value.

Jennifer Maria Schell-Leugers

Maastricht, December 2014