Just to be sure? An analysis of security in relation to the values of well-being, freedom, and equality
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Chapter 6

The Value of Security: Lessons for Theory and Practice

6. The Value of Security: Lessons for Theory and Practice

6.1. Concluding the analysis

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I indicated that this study had the purpose of expanding and deepening our understanding of security and its relationships to a number of key values within contemporary political philosophy. To this end, the second chapter conducted a conceptual analysis of security, and each of the three chapters that followed scrutinised the relationship between security and one value in particular: the third chapter concentrated on well-being, the fourth on freedom, and the fifth on equality. These chapters were set up as independent investigations, and throughout the texts I have done little to show how all the different lines of argumentation connect to one another. In this concluding chapter, I will not pretend that the separate plotlines of the preceding chapters ultimately fit together into one ingenious story of which I can now present a perfect denouement. What I will do, in the first place, is reiterate the insights that I reached so far in a way that the connections between them become more clear. In the second place, I will present a number of new lessons that can be drawn from the combination of these previous insights.

This chapter will proceed as follows. First of all, I summarise the findings of the previous four chapters of this dissertation, this time also adding indications as to how each chapter connects to the preceding one (section 6.2). Subsequently, I take up the only theoretical question posed at the beginning of this study that has not yet been addressed explicitly: from the objectivist perspective on values adopted here, does security itself deserve to be called a value, and if so, what kind of value would it be? (section 6.3) Lastly, reflecting on the practical implications of my findings, I present three lessons about how to deal with real questions about security that may arise within the context of a liberal democratic society (section 6.4).

6.2. Looking back

At the beginning of this dissertation, I suggested that we cannot hope to discover how security relates to core values such as well-being, freedom, and equality before we have established how security itself is to be understood. In order to get this straight, chapter 2 presented a conceptual analysis of security. The point of departure was formed by Waldron's (2006) idea that

security may be thought of as a mode in which an individual can enjoy a good. The good at issue can be anything that contributes to this individual's well-being: we can speak of someone's security of her health or her employment; we can talk about security of not being attacked or security of having the franchise, and so on. But what does it mean for someone to have security of a good; what does this 'mode of enjoyment', as Waldron calls it, entail? In order to answer this question, the chapter built further on Herington's (2019) idea of distinguishing between a factual dimension, a cognitive dimension, and an emotional dimension when it comes to security. In order for someone to count as having full security of a good, it was stipulated, she must 'be sure' of her future enjoyment of this good along all three dimensions: she must *actually* be bound to enjoy this good, she must *believe* that she will, and she must *not fear* that she won't. Furthermore, the belief and the emotional condition involved must be appropriate: they have to be based on an awareness of the facts. This makes security into an integrated concept, which we can call 'security as sureness'. Equipped with the conceptual framework just laid out, I embarked on my analysis of security from an objectivist value perspective.

An obvious starting point for this analysis was the observation that security is generally assumed to be good for people. To what extent is that assumption actually justified? In order to answer this question, chapter 3 investigated the relationship between security and well-being. On the one hand, the chapter argued, having security can indeed be seen to contribute to a person's well-being in three ways. Firstly, if someone is *actually* bound to enjoy some good, this means that she in principle stands to benefit from this good at a later point in time. Secondly, if this person also *believes* that she will enjoy this good, this helps her to avoid wasting resources preparing for a scenario in which she does not enjoy this good, and to set herself up for deriving maximum benefit from the good that awaits her instead. Finally, if she also has *no fear* that she will not enjoy this good, this supports various of her mental and physical functionings. In order for someone to reap the full benefits of security, the chapter demonstrated furthermore, it is important that the facts, her beliefs, and her emotional condition regarding her future enjoyment of a good also align with one another. On the other hand, the chapter continued, there are also three ways in which security may actually *hamper* people's well-being. Firstly, if somebody is *in fact* bound to enjoy a

good, this will actually not make her better off if the good at issue ceases to be good for her at some point – think of a form of housing that serves one's needs first, but does not suit one's mode of life later. Secondly, if somebody *believes* that she will enjoy a good, and she is right in this belief, this may actually rob her of an element of surprise that belongs to a flourishing life too. Lastly, if someone has *no fear* that she will not enjoy some good, she may also miss out on pleasurable experiences of this feeling – the suspense or excitement that one can feel when taking a risk or encountering something new – which can also be a part of human thriving. In a truly flourishing life, the chapter concluded, one does have a steady basis of securities to build on, but at the same time one does not have security in too many aspects of one's life.

Given that security turns out to contribute to our well-being in significant ways (as long as an excess of securities is avoided), it does not seem inappropriate that security is often treated as an important consideration in public decision-making. But there is also another factor that seems crucial in public decision-making, because it plays a central role in the organisation of the state: freedom. It is often suggested, for example in the context of the fight against terrorism and the COVID-19 pandemic, that there is a necessary conflict between security and freedom. But is this really the case? In order to find this out, chapter 4 took a deep dive into the relationship between security and freedom. Upon closer inspection, the chapter discovered, there are actually four different ways in which security and freedom connect to each other. Firstly, freedom *can* indeed come at the cost of security – even though it does not always *need* to. Think of how the freedom of movement comes at the cost of health security when a dangerous virus is going around – but not so much when there is no such a disease spreading. Secondly, security *can* also come at the cost of freedom – but, again, it does not necessarily *have* to. Consider how security against infectious diseases can be promoted through freedom restrictions – but it may also increase as a result of voluntary behavioural adaptations. Thirdly, moving onto the positive connections, freedom can work to the benefit of security. Think of how the freedom that is constituted by the checks and balances of democratic institutions gives citizens security against arbitrary state interference. And fourthly, in turn, security can work to the benefit of freedom. Consider how enjoying more security against virus infection can

expand the freedom that people experience to go out and engage in social activities. All in all, the chapter concluded, the relationship between freedom and security is much more complicated than it is often portrayed, and it is important for public decision-makers to take into account all four connections between freedom and security in cases where the two at first sight seem to conflict.

Given that security makes important contributions to our well-being (as long we have no excess of securities), and that security can promote our freedom (even though conflicts between security and freedom may also arise), it seems increasingly reasonable that security is indeed given substantial consideration in the running of society at large. The second, third, and fourth chapter of this dissertation, however, described security in a very open-ended way – as a mode in which an individual can enjoy *any* good. Thus, at the beginning of the fifth chapter, we were still left with the question: if security is indeed to be adopted as an important factor in the organisation of society, then security *of what goods* should be the point of focus? In order to settle this matter, chapter 5 brought in the value of equality. The ideal of equality, the chapter postulated, has implications in three domains of society: the moral domain, which concerns the allocation of *respect* or *recognition*; the economic domain, which concerns the distribution of *resources*; and the political domain, which concerns the exercise of *rule*. From the requirements of equality in these three domains, the chapter argued, we can derive an argument for providing people with three categories of securities. Firstly, they need security of restraint on the part of others in the sphere of their personal choices, security of being treated respectfully, and security of not facing violence ('egalitarian moral security'). Secondly, people require security of access to sufficient means to fulfil their human needs, security of access to education, work, and a fair income, and security of access to public goods making civic engagement possible ('egalitarian economic security'). Thirdly, people must have security of the ability to form and voice their own political views, security of the chance to have a say in the political decisions of their community, and security of not facing state interference on an arbitrary basis ('egalitarian political security'). On the flipside, the chapter pointed out, there are also three categories of securities that members of an egalitarian society *cannot* be provided due to the demands of equality. Firstly, the members of such a

society cannot be granted security of an unchanging cultural or symbolic order, security of a fixed identity or self-conception, and security of always being viewed and treated by others in accordance with this exact image ('conservative moral security'). Secondly, they do not get absolute security of income or wealth above the level of sufficiency, security of some acquired economic privilege, and security of never having to give up any property against their own will ('libertarian economic security'). Thirdly, they enjoy no security of continuous rule by one particular person or party, security of the community being led into the direction of their own individual liking, and security of 'having it their way' in politics ('authoritarian political security'). Because the securities that can be derived from the ideal of equality – unlike those that go against it – together constitute a bedrock of security that in principle serves *all* members of society, the chapter ultimately suggested, these egalitarian securities may just be the best we can get when it comes to security, at least when that is something to be enjoyed by all.

6.3. The value of security

The two main questions of this dissertation – how should we understand security, and how does it relate to the values of well-being, freedom, and equality? – have now been answered. At the start of this work, however, I also raised another question, which has not yet been addressed explicitly. Looking at security from an objectivist perspective on values, I asked, should we also consider security *itself* to be a value? And if the answer is yes, I added, then what *kind* of value is it?[48] The answers to these questions are importantly connected to the answers to the two main questions of this dissertation. Let me therefore try to answer to the questions just raised by drawing on the findings reached in the preceding chapters.

First of all, it is good to refresh our memories of what an objectivist value perspective entails exactly. On such a perspective, I wrote at the start of this dissertation, values are things that are 'objectively good', meaning that their goodness does not depend completely on people's subjective judgments or impressions of these things. Often, I added, objectivist theories distinguish between things that are good in themselves – these are called

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[48] In line with common discourse in existing literature in the philosophy of values, throughout this chapter, I will assume that there is no difference between saying that 'something *is* a (particular kind of) value' and saying that 'something *has* (a particular kind of) value'.

'intrinsically good' or 'intrinsic values' – and things that derive goodness from some other source – these are called 'extrinsically good' or 'extrinsic values' (Korsgaard, 1983, p. 170).[49] In light of this, we may reformulate the question posed earlier as follows: is security an intrinsic value, an extrinsic value, both, or neither?

Let me start by considering the possibility that security is an *intrinsic* value – that it is 'nonderivatively good'; that it is 'good for its own sake' (Zimmerman, 2019, § 2). Within the entire literature on values and the entire literature on security that I have studied, I have not found a single argument for regarding security as an intrinsic value. Frankena (1963) does include security in his long list of things that may be considered as intrinsic values (p. 88), but he does not provide any argumentation for putting security on this list. Berlin (1969) and many others do talk of security as a value (p. 169), but this does not necessarily entail that they view it as a value of an intrinsic kind, let alone that they would have good grounds for regarding it as such. I myself also find it hard to think of arguments for considering security to be an intrinsic value. With the help of existing literature within the objectivist tradition of thinking about values, however, I can at least attempt to construct such an argument. Different theories within this tradition employ different methods for identifying intrinsic values. I will now try out two of the most well-known methods, and show that these, too, do not give us any grounds for thinking that security would be an intrinsic value.

According to Moore (1903), in order to find out whether a particular state has intrinsic value, we should apply the 'method of isolation': we should ask ourselves if a universe containing only that state would be good (pp. 93, 187, 197). Although some have questioned the merits of this method (Feldman, 1998, p. 353), let us at least give it a try and see if it can provide us with new insights about the value of security. If we imagine a universe containing only a state of security, would that be good? To me, it seems very difficult to imagine such a universe. Insofar as we *can* imagine it, furthermore, it seems hard to see what would be good about it. We might

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[49] Next to 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' values, some philosophers distinguish additional kinds of values, such as 'moral values', 'contributory values', and 'inherent values' (Frankena, 1963, p. 82). Furthermore, remember that the distinction between 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' values is different from the distinction between 'final' and 'instrumental' values (Korsgaard, 1983, p. 170). For a further explanation of this latter point, see footnote 21, chapter 3. Given that the division between 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' values is central within the tradition, I focus only on these two categories of values here.

picture a sole individual, at a particular point in time t_0, who is sure of her enjoyment of a good at a future point in time t_1. In chapter 3, I suggested that this is good for this individual in three ways: it means that she will in principle enjoy this good in the future, it enables her to use her resources more efficiently with an eye to this future, and it liberates her from fear about this aspect of her future. At first sight, then, it seems that there is indeed a certain goodness about the state of security that we are trying to evaluate. At second glance, however, it seems that everything that is good about the state that we are imagining at t_0 actually depends on the fact that there will also be a future state t_1: every single one of the three benefits of security just mentioned bears a reference to this later state, and seems meaningless if this later state were never to come about. This leads us to either of two conclusions. On the one hand, we may conclude that the method of isolation cannot be applied to the case of security, because the very concept of security does not allow us to isolate states of the world in the manner required by Moore's method. On the other hand, we may conclude that the method of isolation suggests that security is not an intrinsic value, because we cannot see what would be good about a universe containing only a state of security without bringing a future state into the picture as well.

Within the Aristotelian tradition of thinking about values, philosophers tend to use a different method for identifying what is intrinsically valuable: they start by looking at the essential properties of beings and ask what it would mean for them to develop or perfect these properties – what it would mean for them to flourish (Hurka, 1993; Kraut, 2007). Although we may raise this question about different kinds of beings, human and non-human alike, since the concept of security is here understood as pertaining to human individuals, let me focus on human beings now. Might it be that security is an intrinsic value because it is a fundamental part of what it means for humans to flourish? The answer must be no, for two reasons. Firstly, on Aristotle's view, strictly speaking, the only thing that actually counts as having intrinsic value for us is human flourishing *itself*. True, human flourishing is made up of various components – common examples are health, knowledge, achievement, pleasure, and friendship (Rasmussen, 1999, p. 4). But in the end, in Aristotle's philosophy, these goods indeed derive their value from the good that they constitute jointly: from the good of human flourishing. Only this good, then, may be

considered as an intrinsic value itself. Secondly, even if we moved away from a strict reading of Aristotle and adopted the view that the various *components* of human flourishing, too, can be said to possess intrinsic value,[50] it would be hard to see why security would count as such a component. In chapter 3, I revealed a number of ways in which security can be *instrumental* for human flourishing, which I just repeated above. In my analysis of the relationship between security and human flourishing in that chapter, however, I found no reason for thinking that security would also be a *component* of human flourishing, deserving of a similar status as the grand goods of knowledge, pleasure, friendship, and so on. Indeed, I found that security may also *hamper* human flourishing in certain ways, providing further reason for being skeptical of the possibility that security may be called an intrinsic value from an Aristotelian point of view, broadly construed.

Having found no grounds for believing that security is an intrinsic value, let me now consider the possibility that security is an extrinsic value – that it is good not 'for its own sake', but 'for the sake of something else to which it is related in some way' (Zimmerman, 2019, § 6).[51] Something can have extrinsic value, for instance, because it is *instrumental for* achieving something else that is good. In chapter 1, I mentioned the example of wealth, the goodness of which could be seen to depend on its role as an instrument for increasing people's happiness. Something can also have extrinsic value, Zimmerman points out, because it is *indicative of* something else that is good. 'Suppose', he illustrates, 'that the results of a certain medical test indicate

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[50] People might take this view, for example, because they subscribe to the widely held belief that the category of 'intrinsic' values stands in contrast to the category of 'instrumental' values. Because the components of human flourishing are not merely 'instrumentally' valuable, these people might think, the components of human flourishing must indeed constitute 'intrinsic' goods. As pointed out by Korsgaard (1983), however, the category of 'instrumental' values actually stands in contrast with that of 'final' values (and the category of 'intrinsic' values stands in contrast with that of 'extrinsic' values). For a further explanation of this point, see footnote 21, chapter 3. Understanding it helps us to see that the components of human flourishing actually need not be 'intrinsic' values.

[51] Note that the 'something else' from which an extrinsic value derives its goodness does not need to be an intrinsic value. An extrinsic value may also derive its goodness from another extrinsic value. This second extrinsic value may in turn derive its goodness from a third extrinsic value, and so on. It seems logical to suppose that in order for some extrinsic value to exist, somewhere down the chain of value derivation there must be some intrinsic value from which the goodness ultimately springs. Whether this must indeed be the case, however, is a matter of philosophical dispute (Zimmerman, 2019, § 6). I will not go into this here.

that the patient is in good health, and suppose that this patient's having good health is intrinsically good. Then we may well want to say that the results are themselves (extrinsically) good. But notice that the results are of course not a means to good health; they are simply indicative of it' (ibid.). In an earlier analysis of different kinds of extrinsic value, Bradley (1998) reaches a similar insight. 'Something could be good', he notes, 'not because of what it causes or is a means to, but rather because of what it *signifies*' (p. 110). Extrinsic values, then, include not just instrumental values, but also values that are 'indicative' (the qualification proposed by Zimmerman (2019, § 6)) or 'signatory' (the term used by Bradley (1998, p. 110)).[52] With these preliminaries out of the way, we may ask: is security an extrinsic value? Is security indeed good for the sake of something else? What would this 'something else' be then? I will now argue that security can indeed be good for the sake of something else. Specifically, I will argue that security derives extrinsic goodness from no less than four values. I will address each of them in turn.

The first source from which security derives extrinsic goodness is constituted by the good the security of which is at issue. In chapter 2, I described security as a mode in which an individual S can enjoy a good G. This mode, I argued there, has a factual aspect, a cognitive aspect, and an emotional aspect. Now, the factual aspect of security entails that the individual will in principle continue or come to enjoy G in the future. The factual aspect of security can thus be seen to *indicate* or *signify* the presence of something of value in the future, that is: G (cf. Herington, 2019, p. 179). This points us at a first reason for thinking that security is an extrinsic value; that security is good for the sake of something else: it is indicative of some good G that is situated in the future.[53]

The second value by virtue of which security can have extrinsic goodness is constituted by well-being. In chapter 3, I wrote that security can

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[52] Next to 'instrumental' and 'indicative/signatory' values, some philosophers distinguish additional kinds of extrinsic values. Some, for instance, treat 'inherent values' as another kind of extrinsic values (Zimmerman, 2019, § 6). Others also consider 'contributory values' as a particular kind of extrinsic values (Bradley, 1998, p. 110). Given that the distinction between 'instrumental' and 'indicative/signatory' values suffices for the purposes of this section, I focus only on these two categories of extrinsic values here.

[53] In line with footnote 51, let me highlight that G may itself be something of either intrinsic value or extrinsic value. For an extensive analysis of the kinds of values that it would be 'worth securing', see Welch (2022, p. 33).

contribute to well-being in various ways. If a person has security of a good, I explained, she will in principle benefit from this good in the future, she is able to use her resources more efficiently, and she enjoys an emotional basis supporting various of her physical and mental functionings. In all of these ways, security can be seen to help a person to achieve a higher level of human flourishing; a higher level of well-being. Presumably, all of the benefits of security just mentioned are importantly dependent on and mediated by the value of the good the security of which is at issue: the higher the value of G, the more that having security of G will benefit a person in the ways just specified. At the same time, the argument rehearsed above suggest that a person's security of G derives goodness from more than G alone: it derives additional value from helping this person to flourish; from playing an instrumental role in the good life. Thus we have found a second reason for considering security as an extrinsic value: it can serve as an instrument for realising the value of well-being.

The third value for the sake of which security can be extrinsically good is the value of freedom. In chapter 4, I argued – among other things[54] – that security can work to the benefit of freedom. Somewhat analogously to how security can contribute to a person's well-being, I pointed out, security can also contribute to someone's freedom. We can see this especially well if we consider freedom as a matter of capabilities. If someone has security in a particular aspect of her life, I demonstrated, this can broaden the range of valuable doings and beings that she can combine, it can liberate her from the idea that she might not be able to combine these different options and should therefore forgo some of them, and it can remove incapacitating feelings of fear. In all of these ways, security can function as an instrument for increasing someone's capabilities; for expanding her 'well-being freedom'. Supposedly, the positive effects of security just mentioned, just like those summed up in the previous paragraph, significantly hinge on the value of G: the good the security of which is at issue. Again, however, there appears to

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[54] The other things that I argued in chapter 4 include my argument that security and freedom can come at each other's cost, and my argument that freedom can work to security's benefit. One might suspect that I conveniently leave out these arguments here, because they threaten the argument that I want to make presently: that security derives extrinsic goodness from freedom. The present argument, however, is perfectly consistent with my earlier arguments: that security has extrinsic value for the sake of freedom does not imply that it is impossible for security (of particular individuals of particular goods) to come into conflict with freedom (of particular individuals to undertake particular activities), or that (a particular form of) freedom cannot also derive some extrinsic value from (a particular form of) security.

be an additional source from which security derives goodness: this time, it is the value of freedom. Thus we have discovered a third reason for taking security to be an extrinsic value: it can be instrumental in promoting the value of freedom.

The fourth and final value from which security can derive extrinsic goodness is the value of equality. In chapter 5, I claimed that the ideal of equality demands that a society provides its members with security of a whole range of goods, including the goods of respectful treatment at the hands of others, access to sufficient means for fulfilling basic human needs, possessing democratic powers, and many more. Security *of these particular goods*, then, seems to have extrinsic value not just by virtue of the goodness of *G*, the goodness of well-being, or the goodness of freedom, but also by virtue of the goodness of equality. Take, for instance, security of being treated respectfully. If all members of some society can be said to have this security, this likely signifies that this society fulfils the demand of equal respect – and thereby, at least partly, the ideal of equality. Or take security of access to sufficient means for basic needs fulfilment. If all members of a society possess this security, it will be difficult for one member to exploit or oppress another, and thus this security serves as an instrument towards realising egalitarian relationships between people. It must be emphasised, however, that the extrinsic value that security may possess for the sake of equality is only borne by security *of particular goods* – the goods the security of which I referred to as 'egalitarian securities' – and not by security *tout court*. Security of goods other than these does not necessarily bear value for the sake of equality. Indeed, security of some goods – the goods the security of which I described as 'conservative', 'libertarian', or 'authoritarian' – may actually be said to have *dis*value in terms of equality. Nonetheless, we have now identified a fourth reason for considering security, at least in some cases, to constitute an extrinsic value: if it concerns security *of some particular goods*, it can be an instrument for or an indication of the value of equality.

The conclusion, then, must be that security does deserve to be called a value, but only in a particular sense. There are no grounds for thinking that security is a value of an intrinsic kind. There are various reasons, however, for considering security to be an extrinsic value. Specifically, security can derive extrinsic goodness from four different sources: from good *G*, whose

future presence it signifies; from well-being, for which it can serve as an instrument; from freedom, for which it can also be instrumental; and from equality, the realisation of which can be promoted or signaled by security of particular goods. Note that I write: security *can* derive extrinsic goodness from well-being, freedom, and equality. Whether it *does* derive goodness from these sources may depend on the circumstances, as well as the particular good the security of which is at issue. The value of security must therefore not be seen as something constant: in different instantiations of security in the real world, security may possess different amounts of value, and derive this value from different sources. This remains important when we turn to the final section of this dissertation.

6.4. Dealing with security issues
At this point, the main theoretical questions of this study have been answered. We now have a better understanding of the concept of security, a stronger grasp of the relationships between security and a number of core values in contemporary political philosophy, and a clearer idea of the sense in which security may be considered to be a value itself. The purpose of this dissertation, however, was not just to advance the academic debate, but also to provide a source of inspiration or guidance for practical action. Indeed, it was primarily with an eye to the societal relevance of this research that it adopted a focus on the relationships between security and the values of well-being, freedom, and equality, which were argued to be three essential building blocks for a liberal democratic society. In closing this study, then, let me try and make explicit how my theoretical insights may be of practical use within the context of such a society.

In today's world, people are confronted with various issues whereby security seems to be at stake in some way. From wars to pandemics, from terrorism to climate change, from the flexibilisation of labour to the question if private lighting of fireworks should be legally allowed. Although it is a contingent matter whether any of these issues is actually framed or perceived as 'a matter of security' within the public or political debate, security can in fact be seen to constitute a relevant concern in dealing with all of these issues. It is by virtue of this fact that I here understand them as 'security issues'. Could my study be of use in determining the right course of action in the face of such issues? I believe that it could. Without pretending

to be able to lay out a perfect roadmap for tackling all issues of security, let me end this dissertation by illustrating three ways in which my insights can be of help when we are confronted with such issues within the context of a liberal democratic society.

Firstly, this study can be helpful in *specifying* the issue at hand. According to my conceptual framework, security is a mode in which an individual can enjoy a good, whereby this mode involves a factual, a cognitive, and an emotional aspect. Whenever we are confronted with an issue of security, then, we are encouraged by my framework to ask a set of clarificatory questions first. Security of *which individuals* is at stake? Security of *what goods* is in question for these individuals? Do they have a lack of security along the factual dimension, the cognitive dimension, the emotional dimension, or all three at once?

In the messy reality of the world as it is, issues are often presented or regarded as 'a matter of security' without any of the details just summed up being specified. If we want to get a clear picture of the issue at hand, however, and if we want to find out where exactly there might be a problem, it is crucial that we do try and answer the questions mentioned above. In some cases, answering these questions will already point in the direction of a certain course of action (or, indeed, suggest that a particular course of action is *not* in order). Let me illustrate this briefly. On the one hand, we can imagine cases whereby the public perceives a risk to be much higher than it actually is – as Goodin (2006) has argued to be the matter, for instance, when it comes to terrorism in the Western world (p. 14). This may suggest that the problem in this case does not primarily lie with the factual aspect of security, but rather with the cognitive and emotional aspects of security. The solution, then, might not be a further reduction of actual risk, but rather an effort to bring the public's risk perception in line with the real risk. On the other hand, we can also imagine cases whereby the public perceives some risks to be much lower than they actually are – climate change might be a good example – which may suggest that action should target the factual aspect of security as well.

Secondly, this study can be of help in *assessing* a security issue. Earlier in this chapter, I showed that security is not good in itself, but it derives goodness from at least four other sources: the good the security of which is at issue, the value of well-being, the value of freedom, and the value

of equality. This entails that if we find that security is compromised in some way, and we have answered the questions put forward in the previous paragraph, we should ask a further set of questions. Why exactly would it be bad that this particular form of security is not realised for these particular people? Does the lack of security of the good at issue cause or signify a harm to their well-being, or their freedom, or equality? Does the shortage of security really present a problem in terms of any of these values?

Often when we identify a lack of security in the real world, we jump to the conclusion that this is a problem in itself. The objectivist perspective on values adopted in this study, however, invites us to reflect a little deeper on the situation at hand. Again, such reflection may already give us some clues about what would be the right course of action (if any action is in order at all). Suppose that we find that many young people leaving school and about to start higher education are insecure as to what is awaiting them in their student lives. Notwithstanding how challenging such a lack of security may be, it seems doubtful that it would be problematic from a value perspective: as long as feelings of insecurity are not gravely incapacitating, indeed, not being sure about what the future holds in a situation like this may be an essential part of living a flourishing life. Now suppose that we find that many young people face uncertain prospects as to the question whether they will at all be able to find a house, a job, and a decent income after they graduate. In this case, we seem to have identified a lack of security that *is* problematic from a value perspective, since insecurity in such crucial areas of life may seriously inhibit people's flourishing, and it goes against equality's demand that all members of society be guaranteed access to such core goods. Action aimed at fostering security, then, is only in order in the second case.

Finally, this study can help in *responding* to issues of security. Throughout this research, I have analysed security in relation to no less than three different values: well-being, freedom, and equality. Above, I suggested that a lack of security can be problematic in terms of any of these values. Action aimed at promoting security, then, may be required in the name of well-being, freedom, equality, or any combination of them. At the same time, it is very well possible that such action *itself* is also problematic in terms of these very values. Think back of the central example of the fourth chapter, the COVID-19 pandemic: although measures against the spreading of the

virus were necessary to protect freedom in some ways, the measures also compromised freedom in other ways. There is no guaranteed harmony, then, between all the various demands of the values of well-being, freedom, an equality. Demands regarding security in the name of these values are no exception to this rule. In light of this, I want to emphasise now, when dealing with an issue of security, we should always adopt a value-pluralist perspective, taking into account all core values that have bearing on the situation, and acknowledging the possibility that these values conflict in the case at hand. This requires that we answer one additional set of questions before deciding on a certain course of action in the face of a security issue. What are the effects of different courses of action, not just in terms of security, but also in terms of well-being, freedom, and equality? Is there a way to promote security without compromising any of these values? Insofar as a certain conflict between security and any of these values is unavoidable, how can value loss be minimised?

This recommendation is especially important given the fact that security in practice often has a tendency to 'crowd out' other values. As security scholars studying the phenomenon of 'securitisation' have frequently pointed out, when an issue is framed or perceived as 'a matter of security', the public is generally inclined to accept extraordinary measures to handle the issue, even if such measures come at the cost of values that are normally viewed as non-negotiable. As Buzan, Wæver & De Wilde (1998) put it: 'Traditionally, by saying "security", a state representative declares an emergency condition, thus claiming a right to use whatever means are necessary to block a threatening development' (p. 21). Using the word 'security' in the public or political debate, then, is not seldom a political move. Instead of referring primarily to the concept of security as I have characterised it, security utterances by political actors in practice often mainly serve to confer the message: 'here is an issue that deserves our urgent attention'. And, in the more extreme cases studied by securitisation scholars: 'addressing this issue justifies suspending our usual values, in the name of restoring security'.

My research provides strong reasons to avoid such an approach. Under highly exceptional circumstances, whereby security in all (or almost all) aspects of life is on the line – a situation of war may be a good example – prioritising security may be justified for a strictly limited period of time.

Generally, however, focusing exclusively on the value of security is not the right way of dealing with problems, even if they do have significant bearing on this value (cf. Floyd, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic can be seen as a case in point. From the viewpoint of my analysis, people's security of health would certainly constitute one important factor to take into account in public decision-making in a situation such as this one. Promoting this security, however, should not be a goal in itself, but it should happen in the name of other values: people's well-being, for instance, or their positive freedom, or equality between those in good health and those in a more vulnerable condition. Furthermore, measures promoting health security would always have to be evaluated also in terms of their *remaining* effects on people's well-being, freedom, and equality. Giving absolute priority to security, on my view, would be the wrong way to go.

Dealing with issues of security in a manner appropriate to liberal democratic societies, then, requires that we answer all of the questions summed up above. It requires that we approach security not as something that is desirable or important for its own sake, but as something that is good for the sake of well-being, freedom, and equality. Security may thus indeed be a thing that we should strive for. But we should only ever do so in the name of the values on which our society is built – and not for the sake of security itself; never 'just to be sure'.