RISK AND THE RATIONALITIES OF SECURITY.
FREEDOM, RISK AND SECURITY

Social theory has tendency to regard risk as a fairly uniform technology, with correspondingly uniform implications for freedom and security. Such analyses also tend to assume that the nature of freedom and security is given in more or less universal-abstract terms. This paper, however, explores the wide diversity of ways in which risk has assembled together with other elements to create ways of governing that have widely divergent implications and characteristics. It suggests that these technologies of risk correspond to specific rationalities of security: divergent governmental conceptions of what security is, what the threats to it are, and how it is to be achieved. In turn, these formulations of risk-security are mutually constitutive with variations in liberal conceptions of freedom. Accordingly freedom - like its key constituents risk and security – loses its given and abstract form and becomes instead a means through which we are governed. Such rationalities of security of course are registered in shaping risk at the overtly political level, for example with respect to grand visions of liberalism. But equally they shape or are registered in highly specific and seemingly 'apolitical' institutions and procedures such as private insurance, health sciences and criminal justice. In this light, the 'development' of risk takes on a rather arbitrary and contingent character at odds with more technologically and politically driven accounts.

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