



Unsafe Gods: Security, Secularism and Schooling

Lynn Davies

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This is a book about risk. Security, be it national, societal or personal, is a global concern but our contemporary gods--religion, secularism and education--can all be a risky business for security.

Using insights from complexity science, the book proposes a new dynamic secularism as a viable way to accommodate diversity of supernatural belief within worldly politics. Exploring the interplay of religion and education in the context of security brings us new insights into how religions learn or are instead "frozen accidents" which hinder transitions to complex adaptive states.

Education can be complicit in the perpetuation of locked-in social divisions and identities, but finding a cross-cutting secular value system such as rights can act to forge new connectivities. Any shift to non-violent solutions to conflict requires unlearning as well as learning, as illustrated in current projects in deradicalization. The paradox of a complex security is that a degree of turbulence and uncertainty is needed. Education has to be about damage limitation but also about skills in creative questioning and adaptation to change.

The chapters cover

- Dimensions of security and insecurity
- Insights from complexity theory: diversity, self-organization, networks and information
- The contradictory role of religion in conflict and in peace-making
- Secularism: myths, types, pretences and risks
- Dynamic secularism: inclusion with critique
- Secular education and umbrella value systems
- Safe schools: physical and mental security for students and teachers
- Disengagement, desistance and debiasing: the learning and unlearning of extremist behaviors
- Learning from the Arab Spring: protest and change through education.

Unsafe Gods sets out to make a case but also to stimulate policy debate. It has relevance to national policies on multiculturalism and social cohesion as well as to counter-terror, but relevance also to school level strategies around safety, security and active citizenship will make it important reading for policy makers and also academics and educationists.

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