

**Supervisory Committee**

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Professor John McLaren, Faculty of Law, Co-Supervisor

Professor R. Michael M'Gonigle, Faculty of Law and School of Environmental Studies

Professor Charles Tolman, Department of Psychology

Professor R.B.J. (Rob) Walker, Department of Political Science

**ABSTRACT**

Modern, Western, secularist legal systems are, in actuality, religious legal systems. The religious bedrock underlying secularist legal systems is the same as the transmuted, and therefore immanentist, faith and creed that underlies the essential mindset and spirit of modernity. Secularist legal systems may be conceived of as semeiotic prisms that refract modernity's relocation, within the phenomenal world, of the transcendence and divine presence of Ultimate Reality. As prisms that bring to light secularist law's customarily unrecognized and unacknowledged, immanentist religious foundation, secularist legal systems express modernity's faith. Further, secularist law acts to validate, enforce, and propagate modernity's religious orthodoxy. Among modernist polities, the United States functions as a bellwether in the modern, Western, civilizational drive to globally proselytize, through the bringing to bear of state power, modernity's worldly religious tradition. Secularist law's unspoken, religious import is powerfully intimated by two interdependent signs that are interwoven within the semeiotic texts comprised by secularist legal systems. Each of these signs embodies one in a pair of reciprocally reinforcing ideas that are avatars of the secularist juridical mind. First is secularist law's idea that all existents – corporeal and non-corporeal; biological and non-biological; human and non-human – are subject to one or another property holder's personal, proprietary claim. Second is the idea that humans, who are in their ontological essence proprietors, have a rightful, transactional power over all existents (inasmuch as all things

that exist can be conceived of as property). As these two ideas presuppose that all existing things are reducible to a tangible, proprietary form that is subject to human ownership, ordering, and exchange, they elevate to a presumed level of metaphysical absoluteness both the human proprietary claim and transactional power over existing things, and the things, themselves. The inquiry construes the underlying, religious significance of the two ideas – that is, it reads these two signs – as they occur within the following, ontologically all-encompassing, areas of secularist law: environmental jurisprudence; intellectual property law; and legal doctrine governing the ownership and alienation of human, biological property.