

European Tort Law

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Professor of Private Law
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To Reinoud Hesper

Preface

A preface is not destined to give an overview, only to emphasize what is essential in the prefacer's view. That is, in my view, the way in which the author searches, in chapter 6, the significance of a European *ius commune*, as it emerges from his examination of three major European liability systems, the English, the French, and the German. The concept goes back to the 12th century and was based mainly in Roman law. In the Middle Ages it was not conceived of as a system of rules enacted for a specific territory. This traditional *ius commune* disintegrated, however, with the rise of rationalism and nationalism in the 18th century during which some rulers wanted the identity of the nation supported by a national codification (at 602). Currently, harmonization and the search for a new *ius commune* are at the very heart of the European private law discourse. Sometimes, the author observes, the discussion seems to have divided the European academic world into believers and heathen. Unfortunately, in this discussion the question whether harmonization is desirable and for what purpose is less debated (at 603-2) as are the differences in attitude towards the codification phenomenon and the level of systematization in the various legal systems, and the academic involvement in it (at 607-1).

In light of these differences, the author examines basic issues in common and codified legal systems, such as the predominance of the judiciary over the legislator (607-2), as well as the characteristics of legal cultures behind the laws (608): the German fondness for legal order, the English fondness for traditions, and the French fondness for *grands principes*. He also examines the policy approaches of these systems based in diverging concepts of justice, *i.e.*, on what is considered to be just, fair and reasonable: English tort law is primarily about corrective justice and regulating conduct (609-2), French tort law is less focused on how someone should behave than on how someone can get damages whereas German law takes an intermediate position but being closer to French law in that both systems regard equality and solidarity, and victim protection, as the main concerns of tort law (609-3).

In this context the role of European law is a functional and fragmentised approach, in so far as harmonisation is needed for the functioning of the internal market, even although the European Parliament and the Commission tend to favour a more systematic approach (at 611). However, is such a systematic harmonisation feasible and desirable? The answer of the author, focused on tort law, is that the case for harmonisation of tort laws is not (yet) made (at 612): '[T]he focus should not be on a Europe united in unity with pan-European rules but rather on a Europe united in diversity with harmonised rules where needed and diversity where possible' (at 613). That does not mean that the quest for a

Preface

European *ius commune* should be abandoned. Quite the contrary: ‘it has lifted academic discussions on private law to a European level. It has paved the way for a truly European legal scholarship rather than a national one. Comparative research has become core business and this has strongly stimulated the trans-boundary dissemination of information . . . The issue is to organize and stimulate this dynamic process but not to force it to provide results unless necessary. The results will need to be flexible and will therefore [depending on the area] to be diverse . . .’ (*ibid.*). As the undersigned has written – a statement that is endorsed by the author: ‘. . . convergence of the minds of practitioners, judges, professors and future lawyers is at least as important as convergence of laws . . .’ (*ibid.*).

Convergence of minds can be achieved in many ways: through national and supranational courts comparing notes and learning from each other, through national regulators spreading good practices amongst themselves, through academics providing teaching and reading materials that can be used in universities and by practitioners throughout the Union. Surely, to promote convergence may take more time than to harmonize laws and will, undoubtedly, be less spectacular than to prepare comprehensive codification (for which there is no legal basis, though, in the European treaties). But, in the long run, convergence may present a more solid basis in order for European integration to take root in the Member States’ legal systems, than codification that is not supported by a sufficient convergence of the minds, will ever be able to do. However, as the author points out (at 613), to make convergence succeed in the area of tort laws, there is a pressing need for a general discourse on policy issues in European tort law in order to explore dividing issues. Issues such as: what are the driving forces and prevailing ideas behind tort law, how much protection victims and potential tortfeasors need, and should the emphasis be on the freedom to act, or on protecting interests, on corrective justice or on distributive justice? The present book is an excellent start to encourage such a policy discourse and to make it fruitful. From that angle, it is excellent reading for a large audience of academics and practitioners, students and teachers within the European Union and beyond.

Walter van Gerven

Leuven, December 2005

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This book has been updated until 1 July 2005. Exceptionally, further developments have been incorporated.

*London,
December 2005*

List of Abbreviations

A	Atlantic Reporter
ABR	Australian Bar Review
AC	Appeal Cases
AcP	Archiv für die civilistische Praxis
AG	Advocate General
AJCL	American Journal of Comparative Law
AJDA	Les actualités juridiques—Droit administratif
al.	alinéa
All ER	All England Reports
ALR	Australian Law Reports
App. Cas.	Law Reports Appeal Cases, House of Lords
Ass. plén.	Assemblée plénière de la Cour de Cassation
B & Ad	Barnewall & Adolphus' King's Bench Reports
BAG	Bundesarbeitsgericht
BGB	Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch
BGH	Bundesgerichtshof
BGHZ	Entscheidungen des Bundesgerichtshofes in Zivilsachen
BIICL	British Institute of International and Comparative Law
Bull. ass. plén.	Bulletin des arrêts de la Cour de cassation, assemblée plénière
Bull. civ.	Bulletin des arrêts de la Cour de cassation, chambres civiles
Bull. crim.	Bulletin des arrêts de la Cour de cassation, chambre criminelle
BVerfG	Bundesverfassungsgericht
BVerfGE	Entscheidungen des Bundesverfassungsgerichtes
BVerwG	Bundesverwaltungsgericht
BVerwGE	Entscheidungen des Bundesverwaltungsgericht
BW	Burgerlijk Wetboek
C	Chronique
CA	Court of Appeal
Cal.	California Reporter
Cam LJ	Cambridge Law Journal
CC	Code civil
CE	Conseil d'Etat
CFI	Court of First Instance
Ch	Official Law Reports (Chancery Division)

List of Abbreviations

Ch. mixte	Chambre mixte de la Cour de cassation
Ch. réun.	Chambres réunies de la Cour de cassation
Civ.	Cour de cassation (chambre civile)
CLR	Commonwealth law reports
CMLR	Common Market Law Review
CMR	Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road
COM	Document of the European Commission
Com.	Chambre commerciale de la Cour de cassation
comm.	comments
Cons. const.	Conseil constitutionnel
CP	Common Pleas (Law Reports)
Crim.	Chambre criminelle de la Cour de cassation
D	Recueil Dalloz et Sirey
DAR	Deutsches Autorecht
DC	Recueil critique Dalloz
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik
DH	Dalloz Hebdomadaire
DLR	Dominion Law Reports
DM	Deutschmark
DP	Recueil périodique et critique Dalloz
E & B	Ellis & Blackburn's Queen's Bench Reports
EC	European Community
	Treaty establishing the European Community
ECC	Draft for a European Civil Code (Von Bar Group) (nr 603-1)
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECJ	Court of Justice of the European Communities
ECR	Reports of Cases before the Court of Justice of the European Communities and the Court of First Instance
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
ECU	European Currency Unit
EEA	European Economic Area
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ELJ	European Law Journal
ELR	European Law Review
EMLR	Entertainment and Media Law Reports
ER	English Reports

List of Abbreviations

ERPL	European Review of Private Law
ETL	Yearbook on European Tort Law (see Bibliography)
EU	European Union
EWCA Civ.	England and Wales Court of Appeal (Civil Division)
Ex	Court of Exchequer
F	Federal Reporter
Fam	Official Law Reports: Family Division
FamRZ	Zeitschrift für das gesamte Familienrecht
FLR	Family Law Reports
FRF	Franc français
FSR	Fleet Street Reports
Gaz. Pal.	Gazette du Palais
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GG	Grundgesetz
GmbH	Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung
GmbHG	Gesetz betreffend die Gesellschaften mit beschränkter Haftung
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
Harvard LR	Harvard Law Review
HL	Judicial Committee of the House of Lords
HPfIG	Haftpflichtgesetz
HR	Hoge Raad
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICLQ	International and Comparative Law Quarterly
ICR	Industrial Cases Reports
IR	Informations rapides
ITL	Italian Lire
JCP	Juris-Classeur périodique (also: Semaine Juridique)
JW	Juristische Wochenschrift
JZ	Juristenzeitung
KB	King's Bench
KG	Kammergericht
LG	Landesgericht
LGR	Local Government Reports
LJ	Lord Justice

List of Abbreviations

Lloyd's Rep.	Lloyd's List Law Reports
LQR	Law Quarterly Review
LR	Law Reports
LT	Law Times
LuftVG	Luftverkehrsgesetz
MDR	Monatschrift für Deutsches Recht
Mod. Rep.	Modern Reports
Mod LR	Modern Law Review
N	Randnummer
NE	North Eastern Reporter
NJ	Nederlandse Jurisprudentie
NJW	Neue Juristische Wochenschrift
NJW-RR	NJW-Rechtsprechungsreport Zivilrecht
NPC	New Practice Cases
NZLR	New Zealand Law Reports
obs.	observation
OJ	Official Journal of the European Communities
OJ C	Official Journal of the European Communities, Cases
OJ L	Official Journal of the European Communities, Legislation
OJLS	Oxford Journal of Legal Studies
OLG	Oberlandesgericht
P	Pacific Reporter
PACS	Pacte civil de solidarité
PC	Judicial Committee of the Privy Council
PETL	Principles of European Tort Law (Vienna Group) (nr 603–1)
PIBD	Propriété industrielle, Bulletin documentaire
PIQR	Personal Injuries and Quantum Reports
PNLR	Professional Negligence and Liability Reports
QB	Queen's Bench
QBD	Queen's Bench Division
RabelsZ	Rabels Zeitschrift
rapp.	rapporteur
Rb.	Rechtbank
Rec. CE	Recueil des décisions du Conseil d'État (also: Recueil Lebon)
Rec. cons. const.	Recueil des décisions du Conseil constitutionnel

List of Abbreviations

Req.	Chambre des requêtes de la Cour de cassation
Resp. civ. et ass.	Responsabilité civile et assurances
RG	Reichsgericht
RGAR	Revue générale des assurances et des responsabilités
RGZ	Entscheidungen des Reichsgerichtes
RIDC	Revue de droit international et de droit comparé
RJDA	Revue de jurisprudence du droit des affaires
RM Themis	Rechtsgeleerd Magazijn Themis
RPC	Reports of Patent, Design and Trade Mark Cases
RTD civ.	Revue trimestrielle de droit civil
RTD pub.	Revue trimestrielle de droit public
RTR	Road Traffic Reports
RvdW	Rechtspraak van de Week
S	Recueil Sirey
SC	Session Cases
SI	Statutory Instrument
SLT	Scottish Law Times
SO	Southern Reporter
Soc.	Chambre sociale de la Cour de cassation
Somm.	Sommaires
StGB	Strafgesetzbuch
StVG	Straßenverkehrsgesetz
TBBR	Tijdschrift voor Belgisch Burgerlijk Recht
TC	Tribunal des Conflits
TGI	Tribunal de grande instance
TLR	Times Law Reports
Tulane LR	Tulane Law Review
UK	United Kingdom
UKHL	House of Lords (United Kingdom)
UmweltHG	Umwelthaftungsgesetz
UWG	Gesetz gegen unlauteren Wettbewerb
VAT	Value Added Tax
VersR	Versicherungsrecht
VLR	Victorian Law Reports
VR	Verkeersrecht
	Victorian Reports

List of Abbreviations

WAM	Wet Aansprakelijkheidsverzekering Motorrijtuigen
WHG	Wasserhaushaltsgesetz
WLR	Weekly Law Reports
Yale LJ	Yale Law Journal
ZEuP	Zeitschrift für Europäisches Privatrecht
ZfS	Zeitschrift für Schadensrecht
ZGB	Zivilgesetzbuch
ZIP	Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsrecht und Insolvenzpraxis
ZPO	Zivilprozessordnung

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