



From Civil to Human Rights

Dialogues on Law and Humanities in the United States and Europe

Helle Porsdam, Professor of American Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

'Helle Porsdam's new book is a readable and perceptive analysis of European and American perceptions of essential human rights and their roots in national and regional cultures. Professor Porsdam traces the notions of civil, political, social and economic interests as rights protected and implemented by law on both sides of the Atlantic. From Civil to Human Rights is a "must read" for Europeans, Americans, and everyone else who wants to learn more about the institutions, values, hopes and dreams that bring us together and hold us apart at the beginning of the 21st century.'

– Peter L. Murray, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, US

'Is there a special human rights narrative emerging from the chastened soul of post-war Europe? What lies ahead for that great but shattered community? Helle Porsdam, a leader in the related fields of human rights and humane letters, bids fair to answer these and other pressing questions. Along the way her highly nuanced intellect addresses the frustrating differences among those contentious first cousins, Europe and the United States. The result is a wide-ranging, richly informed inquiry about Europe's rise from the ashes and the choices it must make to inspire rather than repulse the world around it.'

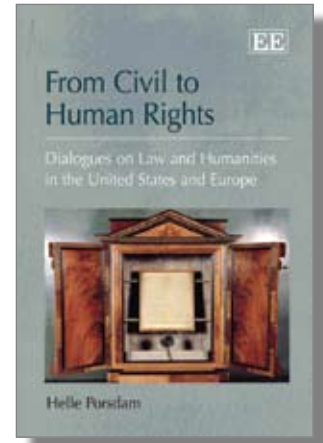
– Richard Weisberg, Cardozo Law School, New York, US

Europeans have attempted for some time to develop a human rights talk and now European intellectuals are talking about the need to construct 'European narratives.' This book illustrates that these narratives will emphasize a political and cultural vision for a multi-ethnic and more cosmopolitan Europe.

The narratives evolve around human rights, partly in the hope that they might function as a cultural glue in an increasingly multi-ethnic Europe, and partly because they are intimately connected with that part of enlightenment thinking that sought to promote democracy and the rule of law. Helle Porsdam discusses the development of human rights as a discourse of atonement for Europeans – a discourse which has the potential to become a shared, transatlantic discourse.

Using an interdisciplinary approach, this book will be an invaluable research tool for postgraduate students and scholars within the fields of law, history, political science and international relations.

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