



Of the Law of Nature and Nations: In Five Volumes (Natural Law Cloth)

Samuel Pufendorf

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In *Of the Law of Nature and Nations*, Pufendorf provided a comprehensive system of society, law, and government based on a theory of human nature. Eschewing contemporary theological ideas of human perfection and other-worldly beatitude, he founded his natural law on the need for sociability in this world. While paying great respect to Grotius as the founder of a modern, enlightened natural law, Pufendorf criticized his remaining “scholasticism.” Similarly, he learned from Hobbes but rejected the reduction of natural law to individual self-interest. Pufendorf wanted to transform natural law by getting rid of its metaphysical foundations, but he retained its function as a moral basis for civil law and the state.

Of the Law of Nature and Nations was Pufendorf’s magnum opus. Despite its enormous size, the work was translated into nine languages. Together with the shorter textbook version, *The Whole Duty of Man*—published in thirteen languages—Pufendorf’s work influenced generations of students across Europe and America.

Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1694) was one of the most important figures in early-modern political thought. An exact contemporary of Locke and Spinoza, he transformed the natural law theories of Grotius and Hobbes, developed striking ideas of toleration and of the relationship between church and state, and wrote extensive political histories and analyses of the constitution of the German empire.

Basil Kennett (1674–1715) was an antiquary, translator, and Anglican clergyman who led a team effort in translating Pufendorf’s great work.

Knud Haakonssen is Professor of Intellectual History at the University of Sussex, England.

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