



Two Books of the Elements of Universal Jurisprudence (Natural Law Paper)

Samuel Pufendorf

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Two Books of the Elements of Universal Jurisprudence was Pufendorf's first work, published in 1660. Its appearance effectively inaugurated the modern natural-law movement in the German-speaking world. The work also established Pufendorf as a key figure and laid the foundations for his major works, which were to sweep across Europe and North America.

Elements of Universal Jurisprudence established Pufendorf's political theory, which, when fully developed, became the most significant alternative to rights-based theories. Pufendorf rejected the concept of natural rights as liberties and the suggestion that political government is justified by its protection of such rights, arguing instead for a principled limit to the state's role in human life. The Liberty Fund edition is based on the translation by William Abbott Oldfather prepared for the Classics of International Law series published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

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.

Thomas Behme is a member of the Institute for Philosophy at the Free University of Berlin.

William Abbott Oldfather (1880–1945) was Professor of Classics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

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

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