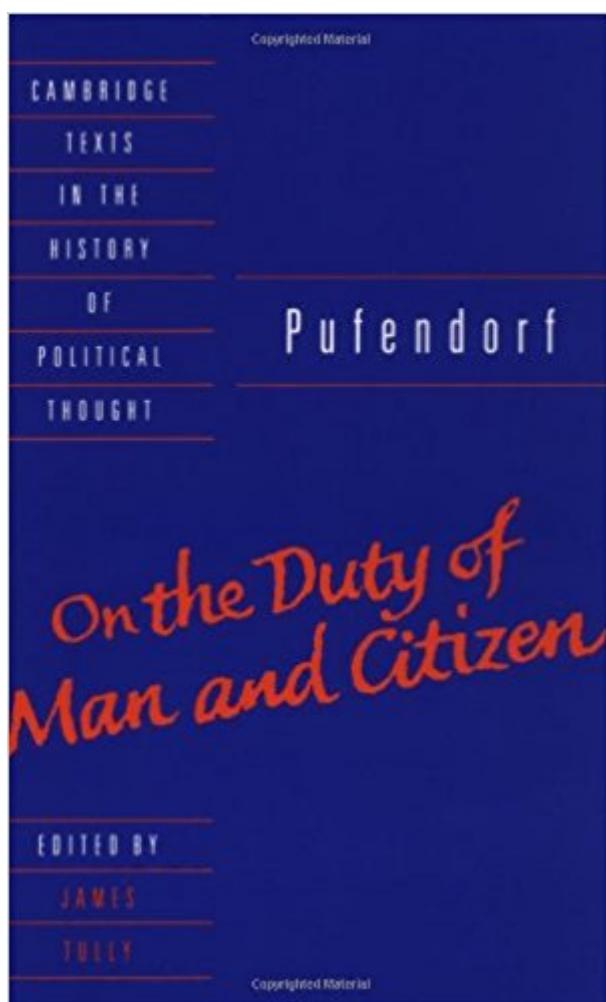


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Pufendorf: On The Duty Of Man And Citizen According To Natural Law (Cambridge Texts In The History Of Political Thought)



Synopsis

Samuel Pufendorf is one of the most important moral and political philosophers of the seventeenth century. His theory, which builds on Grotius and Hobbes, was immediately recognized as a classic and taken up by writers as diverse as Locke, Hume, Rousseau, and Smith. Over the past twenty years there has been a renaissance of Pufendorf scholarship. *On the Duty of Man and Citizen* is Pufendorf's own epitome of his monumental *On the Law of Nature and of Nations*, and it served as a basic text in European universities throughout the Enlightenment. This edition has a lucid and historically sensitive translation by Michael Silverthorne, the first since the early twentieth century. James Tully's introduction sets the text in its context, summarizes the main arguments, surveys recent literature on Pufendorf, and shows how Pufendorf transformed natural law theory into an independent discipline of juristic political philosophy that dominated reflection on politics until Kant.

Book Information

Series: Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought

Paperback: 236 pages

Publisher: Cambridge University Press (July 26, 1991)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0521359805

ISBN-13: 978-0521359801

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.6 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #337,919 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #26 in Books > Law > Legal Theory & Systems > Natural Law #186 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Political Science > Reference #5770 in Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Political Science

Customer Reviews

"...an invaluable resource for anyone interested in the origins and development of modern moral and political philosophy, beyond the way that history has been shaped by the now canonical figures and texts." Canadian Philosophical Reviews

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Latin --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Explanation: Pufendorf creates an abridged but complete system of his natural law 'juristic' philosophy. It is covered in two books located in this single edition. People who are interested in Thomas Hobbes, Hugo Grotius, and John Locke will find Pufendorf especially interesting. (Pufendorf was a major influence on Locke.) Summary: The book is written very lucidly but also written very tersely. This can be deceiving because there is a lot of thought packed into each sentence. Pufendorf starts out by explaining in the preface how he separates natural law from divine law and how natural law isn't necessarily god's law because god's law would only affect a being in the after life. He then creates the Sovereign and Civil Society argument out of this. He defines his natural law in human sociality - how humans relate to each other and their environment. Whether it be between man's self, his fellow men, society in general, human action, contracts, language, duty to god, and property, natural law is at work. Pufendorf covers all these topics in the first book. The second book covers natural law and institutions. The biggest institution covered is the state but Marriage and Family are also covered. Pufendorf also describes the function of civil laws as legislating on subjects undefined by natural law. Another function of civil society in Pufendorf's view is to promote natural law through civil law or at least respect it. Comments: Sorry for the uber-brief summary but the book is quite short. I had to say I really loved it and it was much easier to read than Hobbes. Reading this today you get the feeling that a lot of what Pufendorf is saying is self-evident but for the time period (i.e. 1672) this was mind boggling stuff. It is a fun read and very important if you want to understand the "early-modern" period of thought, especially that of the whole "War and Peace" argument. Philosophers of this period have this paranoid obsession with Civil War and Pufendorf is no exception.

Pufendorf is one of the lesser known political theorists, but he is one of the most lucid that I have ever encountered. It is a wonder to me that he is not read in more college classrooms, as his style is accessible and lively and his commentary covers a tremendous range of topics. After reading, I've definitely become a Pufendorfist.

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