



The Principles of Natural and Politic Law (Natural Law Paper)

Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui

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The year 1694 saw the death of Samuel Pufendorf, who, with Hugo Grotius, was the foremost representative of the modern tradition of natural law theory, and the birth of Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui, who helped transform the tradition and convey it to new generations. **As professor of natural law in Geneva, Burlamaqui used Pufendorf's works on natural law but taught and wrote on the subject in the vernacular, not in the traditional university Latin. By making natural jurisprudence more accessible, Burlamaqui helped make it part of civic education. Burlamaqui intended his writings to defend a middle road between the two main rival traditions in early modern natural law theory, that deriving from Leibniz and Wolff and that from Pufendorf and Barbeyrac. In fact, he seems closer to the former. The basis of this version of *The Principles of Natural and Politic Law* is Thomas Nugent's 1763 English translation, which became a standard textbook at Cambridge and at many premier American colleges, including Princeton, Harvard, and the University of Pennsylvania. The first scholarly work on Burlamaqui was written by an American, M. Ray Forrest Harvey, who in 1937 argued that Burlamaqui was well known among America's Founding Fathers and that his writings exerted considerable influence upon the American constitutional system. In his introduction, Nugent said of Burlamaqui: "His singular beauty consists in the alliance he so carefully points out between ethics and jurisprudence, religion and politics, after the example of Plato and Tully, and the other illustrious masters of antiquity."**

Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui (1694–1748) was a Swiss jurist. His chief works are *Principes du droit naturel (Principles of Natural Law)* (1747) and *Principes du droit politique (Principles of Political Law)* (1751).

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