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**John Locke – Prophet of Political  
Freedom - I**

**Lead: Emerging from the political ferment of the English Civil War, John Locke, one of the seminal thinkers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, laid the philosophical basis for liberal representative government.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: John Locke was born in 1632 in Pensford, south of Bristol, England. His father, a country attorney, was of puritan inclination and fought in the Civil War on the**

side of Parliament. This enabled him to send his son to Westminster School where the boy's superior performance earned him a scholarship at Christ Church College, Oxford. There he also excelled, but found the traditional curriculum tedious and demonstrated early a lifelong eclectic interest in a wide variety of subjects such as empirical science and medicine.

After several years of teaching and then diplomatic service on the Continent, Locke returned to Oxford and there in the summer of 1666 met the politically well-connected Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper, the future 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury. The following year Locke joined the Ashley

household as combination tutor, physician and general advisor to the Lord. Their close collaboration continued until the Earl's death in exile in 1683. This relationship exposed Locke to the rough and tumble primitive politics of Restoration Stuart England and under Shaftesbury's tutelage Locke began to formulate his political philosophy. Writing later in *Two Treatises of Government* (1690) he asserted that all men have God-given natural rights to liberty and property. Governmental authority rests solely on the consent of the people and the government that breaks that trust can be resisted with rebellious force. Next time: John Locke and the modern mind.

**Research assistance by Barbara Laney and Eulethia Winston-Fisher, at the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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<http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/l/locke.htm>