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

Lead: His political philosophy laid the foundation for modern liberal democracy, but in many ways, John Locke helped change the way people think. Some have called him the first modern mind.

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

Content: Not content to simply absorb the classical education he received at 17th century Westminster School and Oxford University, John Locke embarked upon a life of

fruitful inquiry into a wide variety of disciplines. He was interested in medicine, experimental science, philosophy, economics, practical politics, education, language, diplomacy, and religion, in a hungry but not Faustian pursuit of knowledge. In most of these fields he was not an expert, but neither was he an amateur floating from one whim to another.

Locke's great contribution was his ability to, what we would call, connect the dots, to organize in his mind how knowledge in one field was related to knowledge in another field, how economics was related to political liberty, how education furthered constitutional freedom. He grew up in

a puritan family but insisted that the state should maximize religious toleration, and except for atheists and Catholics, should leave the enforcement of faith and morality in the hands of the church.

In the nearly two centuries since the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, with few exceptions, the great minds of Europe had been obsessed with matters religious and spiritual. Locke rejected this essentially medieval outlook and combined with faith in science as practiced by his fellow members of the Royal Society including Sir Isaac Newton, demonstrated a whole new way of thinking that some have described as the first modern mind.

Author Maurice Cranston asserts that Locke's career was focused on the understanding of two principle ideals, knowledge and liberty. He wanted man to acquire as much of both as possible. The key to his quest was to define the limits of knowledge and the limits of liberty. John Locke died in 1704.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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