



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown
Philosophy Category - Key Issues and Questions to Address



Philosophy Q2

Should we treat non-human animals well because they have rights, interests, neither, or both?

Key Issues and Questions to Address

1. Define Key Terms

Distinguish between moral rights, legal rights, and natural rights

Clarify different types of interests (welfare interests, preference interests)

Specify which animals the analysis applies to (all sentient beings, mammals, vertebrates)

Consider gradations of moral status based on cognitive complexity

Analyze how Lockean natural rights might extend beyond humans

2. Analyze Philosophical Approaches

Compare utilitarian approaches focusing on interests (Singer)

Evaluate deontological approaches focusing on rights (Regan)

Consider hybrid theories combining rights and interests (DeGrazia)



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Examine contextual approaches based on relationships (Palmer)

Assess how Lockean property theory constrains animal use

3. Address Theoretical Questions

Can rights exist without interests? Can interests exist without rights?

Are rights derived from interests or independent of them?

Do different animals deserve different moral consideration?

Is sentience sufficient for moral standing or are other capacities required?

How do domestication and dependency affect our obligations?

4. Consider Practical Implications

How different frameworks apply to animal agriculture, research, pets

What policies follow from rights-based vs. interest-based approaches



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Whether rights claims are compatible with current institutional structures

Balance between human and non-human animal considerations

Practical feasibility of implementing different ethical frameworks

5. Evaluate Historical Progression

Trace development from indirect duties (Locke, Kant) to direct consideration

Show how scientific understanding has influenced ethical theories

Examine how religious and cultural views have shaped animal ethics

Consider how changing human-animal relationships affect ethical views

Analyze how Lockean natural law tradition has evolved regarding animals

6. Develop a Nuanced Position

Consider whether rights and interests are complementary rather than opposed

Evaluate whether different frameworks apply to different contexts



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Address potential conflicts between animal and environmental ethics

Recognize practical constraints while maintaining ethical aspirations

Consider how Lockean foundation might support contemporary approaches

