



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown
Philosophy Category - Recommended Readings



Philosophy Q2

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

Recommended Readings

Classical and Enlightenment Perspectives

1. John Locke's "Some Thoughts Concerning Education"

Warns against allowing children to be cruel to animals

Argues cruelty to animals leads to cruelty toward humans

Suggests indirect duty regarding animals, not direct duties to them

Implies animals lack intrinsic moral standing but deserve consideration

Establishes early framework for indirect duty view of animal treatment

2. John Locke's "Second Treatise of Government"

Establishes natural law foundation for property rights over animals

Animals seen as resources given by God for human use

Introduces stewardship concept - humans as caretakers of God's property

Suggests limits on animal exploitation through waste prohibition

Sets philosophical groundwork for responsible dominion view of animals

3. John Locke's "Essay Concerning Human Understanding"

Distinguishes humans from animals through rationality and reflection

Acknowledges animal sentience and capacity for pleasure/pain

Animals possess "sensitive knowledge" but lack abstract reasoning

Establishes cognitive hierarchy that influences moral status



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Provides framework that could support interest-based consideration

4. René Descartes' "Discourse on Method"

Presents mechanistic view of animals as complex automata

Denies animal consciousness and sentience ("beast-machine" hypothesis)

Justifies disregard for animal suffering based on lack of mind

Provides historical counterpoint to contemporary views

Established philosophical position still relevant to debates on animal consciousness

5. Immanuel Kant's "Lectures on Ethics"

Argues animals are not ends in themselves, only means

Cruelty to animals wrong because it damages human character

Establishes influential "indirect duty" view of animal ethics

Denies direct moral status to animals while advocating kind treatment

Provides reasoning for treating animals well without granting rights

6. Jeremy Bentham's "An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation"

Famous quote: "The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?"

Establishes sentience (capacity to suffer) as basis for moral consideration

Shifts focus from rationality to suffering as morally relevant characteristic

Foundational text for interest-based approach to animal ethics

Provides utilitarian framework for considering animal welfare

7. Arthur Schopenhauer's "On the Basis of Morality"

Criticizes Kantian exclusion of animals from direct moral concern



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Argues compassion should extend to all suffering beings

Emphasizes unity of all life through capacity for suffering

Early philosophical defense of direct duties to animals

Connects animal ethics to broader metaphysical framework

8. Henry Salt's "Animals' Rights: Considered in Relation to Social Progress"

First systematic defense of concept of animal rights

Argues for rights based on sentience and individual experience

Connects animal protection to broader social justice movements

Critiques anthropocentrism in ethical frameworks

Provides historical foundation for modern rights-based approaches

Contemporary Sources

1. Peter Singer's "Animal Liberation" (1975)

Introduces concept of "speciesism" as unjustified bias

Argues for equal consideration of interests across species

Focuses on capacity for suffering as sole relevant criterion

Rejects rights framework in favor of utilitarian approach

Provides philosophical foundation for modern animal advocacy

2. Peter Singer's "Practical Ethics" (1979)

Develops sophisticated interest-based approach to animal ethics

Argues different interests deserve different weights based on capacities

Explores tensions between human and animal interests



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Addresses practical conflicts in applied animal ethics

Shows how interest-based approach handles complex ethical dilemmas

3. Tom Regan's "The Case for Animal Rights" (1983)

Defends rights-based approach against utilitarian alternatives

Introduces "subject-of-a-life" criterion for rights-bearing

Argues inherent value creates inviolable rights against harm

Differentiates rights from interests and welfare considerations

Provides comprehensive rights-based alternative to Singer

4. Gary Francione's "Introduction to Animal Rights" (2000)

Argues property status of animals violates basic right not to be treated as things

Critiques welfare reforms as reinforcing property paradigm

Presents abolitionist approach to animal rights

Distinguishes between welfare and rights approaches

Addresses legal and institutional barriers to animal rights

5. Martha Nussbaum's "Frontiers of Justice" (2006)

Applies capabilities approach to animal ethics

Argues different species have different flourishing requirements

Combines elements of both rights and interests approaches

Critiques contract theory for excluding animals

Shows how justice framework can incorporate animal concerns

6. David DeGrazia's "Taking Animals Seriously" (1996)

Develops coherence-based approach to animal ethics



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Argues for equal consideration while acknowledging different capacities

Explores connections between interests and rights

Analyzes moral status across different animal species

Shows how rights might be grounded in interests

7. Clare Palmer's "Animal Ethics in Context" (2010)

Argues obligations vary based on relationship to animals

Distinguishes between wild and domesticated animal ethics

Challenges one-size-fits-all approaches to animal ethics

Shows how context affects rights and interest considerations

Demonstrates importance of human-animal relationships to ethical duties

8. Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka's "Zoopolis" (2011)

Applies political theory to animal rights framework

Different categories of animals deserve different kinds of rights

Wild animals deserve sovereignty, domesticated animals citizenship

Shows how rights framework can accommodate contextual factors

Expands rights approach beyond negative rights to political rights

9. Christine Korsgaard's "Fellow Creatures" (2018)

Reconstructs Kantian approach to include direct duties to animals

Animals value their good in way that makes them ends in themselves

Critiques both rights-based and utilitarian approaches

Shows how deontological framework can accommodate animal ethics



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Addresses historical exclusion of animals from moral theories

10. Mark Rowlands' "Animal Rights" (2009)

Defends contractarian approach to animal rights

Modifies Rawlsian theory to include animals in moral community

Addresses rationality objection to animal rights

Shows how contractarian approaches can overcome speciesism

Connects animal rights to broader theories of justice

11. Bernard Rollin's "Animal Rights and Human Morality" (1981)

Develops concept of animal telos (nature) as basis for rights

Argues rights protect essential interests related to species nature

Combines science of animal behavior with ethical theory

Shows how scientific understanding supports moral consideration

Addresses practical applications in animal husbandry and research

12. Lori Gruen's "Entangled Empathy" (2015)

Develops empathy-based approach to animal ethics

Critiques abstract theories in favor of relationship-based ethics

Shows how empathy connects to moral responsibility

Presents feminist alternative to rights and interest approaches

Emphasizes importance of attending to particular animal experiences

13. Cora Diamond's "Eating Meat and Eating People" (1978)

Critiques both utilitarian and rights-based approaches as abstract

Argues moral relation to animals emerges from shared vulnerability



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Questions whether rights or interests capture full moral dimension

Shows how language shapes our ethical thinking about animals

Provides Wittgensteinian perspective on animal ethics

14. J. Baird Callicott's "In Defense of the Land Ethic" (1989)

Critiques rights-based approach from environmental perspective

Argues holistic view challenges individualistic animal ethics

Shows tensions between animal rights and ecosystem protection

Questions whether concepts of rights or interests apply to wild animals

Provides ecological perspective on animal ethics