



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



Psychology Q1

Is objectivity all in the mind?

Recommended Readings

Historical Sources

John Locke's Works

1. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1689) - Locke's masterwork explores the origins of human knowledge and understanding. Pay special attention to Book II where he distinguishes between primary qualities (objectively in objects) and secondary qualities (subjectively in the mind), and Book IV where he discusses degrees of knowledge and probability.
2. The Conduct of the Understanding (1706) - Published posthumously, this work focuses on intellectual virtues and proper reasoning methods. Locke argues for developing habits of mind that would lead to more objective thinking.
3. Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1693) - While primarily about education, this text contains Locke's views on how the mind can be trained to perceive the world more accurately.

Other Historical Works

1. Immanuel Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" (1781) - Kant develops transcendental idealism, arguing that while objects exist independently of perception, our knowledge of them is structured by a priori categories of understanding.



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2. George Berkeley's "A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge" (1710) - Berkeley challenges Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities, arguing that all qualities exist only in the mind.
3. David Hume's "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding" (1748) - Hume takes an empiricist approach to knowledge but introduces skepticism about causal reasoning, challenging notions of objective knowledge.
4. René Descartes' "Meditations on First Philosophy" (1641) - Provides the rationalist counterpoint to Locke's empiricism, seeking certainty through methodical doubt.

Contemporary Sources

1. Thomas Nagel's "The View From Nowhere" (1986) - Explores the tension between subjective perspectives and the goal of objectivity in philosophical inquiry.
2. Hilary Putnam's "Reason, Truth and History" (1981) - Develops a position of "internal realism" that critiques both objectivist and relativist accounts of knowledge.
3. John Searle's "The Construction of Social Reality" (1995) - Distinguishes between "ontologically objective" and "ontologically subjective" facts, useful for understanding different meanings of objectivity.



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4. Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison's "Objectivity" (2007) - A historical study of how the concept of scientific objectivity has changed over time, showing it's not a static concept.
 5. Ruth Millikan's "Language, Thought, and Other Biological Categories" (1984) - Develops a theory of mental representation that connects objective reality to mental content.
 6. Andy Clark's "Surfing Uncertainty: Prediction, Action, and the Embodied Mind" (2015) - Presents the predictive processing framework of perception, which has implications for how the mind constructs objective reality.
 7. Lisa Feldman Barrett's "How Emotions Are Made" (2017) - Challenges the view that emotions are objective categories, arguing instead that they are constructed by cultural and psychological factors.

Psychology-Specific Resources

1. Michael Tomasello's "A Natural History of Human Thinking" (2014) - Examines the evolution of human cognitive abilities, including shared intentionality that enables objectivity through social coordination.
2. Daniel Kahneman's "Thinking, Fast and Slow" (2011) - Details cognitive biases that systematically distort our thinking, challenging simple notions of objectivity.



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3. Jesse Prinz's "The Conscious Brain" (2012) - Proposes an "attended intermediate-level representation" theory of consciousness relevant to questions of phenomenal experience versus objective reality.
 4. Patricia Churchland's "Neurophilosophy" (1986) - Pioneering work connecting philosophical questions about mind and knowledge to neuroscientific discoveries.

