

CORE TOPICS ADDRESSED BY THEORISTS

Theorists since at least the Ancient period have attempted to answer several basic and often overlapping questions:

1. **BEING OR REALITY:** What is the nature of the universe in which we live? Of what exactly does it consist? Is it solely a material phenomenon or is there a non-material spiritual element to it as well? The field devoted to the study of such questions is called ontology (from the Greek *ontos*, being or what there is, and *logos*, discourse or propositions) while cosmology is devoted to theorising the origins of the universe.
2. **KNOWLEDGE:** If we make claims about the nature of reality, how can we be sure that they are true? How can we justify or prove our truth-claims? The field devoted to the study of such questions is epistemology (from the Greek *episteme*, knowledge) while logic scrutinises the validity of the arguments which we advance in support of our assertions.
3. **COMMUNICATION:** What role, if any, does language play in our knowledge of the world? How do words mean what they do? How are they combined to produce statements? The fields devoted to the study of language are called linguistics and philosophy of language.
4. **HUMAN NATURE / THE SELF / THE SUBJECT:** What is a human being? Are we solely physical creatures or is there a part of us that transcends the physical? Is our mind distinct from the body? The fields devoted to the study of such questions are psychology and philosophy of mind.
5. **MORALITY:** Is it possible to discern right from wrong? Is there a correct way to behave and, thus to live our lives? How we should treat our fellow humans? The field devoted to the study of such questions is ethics.
6. **THE SOCIAL FORMATION:** What form do human societies take? How do we govern ourselves? What form ought they to take? How should we govern ourselves? The field devoted to the study of such questions is sociology (social theory) and politics (political theory).