

Ancient Philosophy

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CATHOLIC STUDIES
ACADEMY



Ancient Philosophy Syllabus & Objectives

Ancient Philosophy

In many ways ancient philosophy set the agenda and foundations for all subsequent developments in the history of philosophy. In this course, students will be introduced to the major figures and ideas of ancient philosophy. This course will set the stage for subsequent lessons in both the history of philosophy and systematic philosophy. This course will include discussions of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine among others. Students in this course will be equipped to:

- demonstrate familiarity with the major figures and movements of ancient philosophy.
- identify and explain the core ideas and arguments of ancient philosophy
- critically and creatively engage with the most important ideas and arguments of ancient philosophy.
- identify the ways in which the ideas and arguments of ancient philosophy impacted the development of catholic theology and continue to be applicable in today's world.

Ancient Philosophy

Lectures and Recommended Readings

The following lectures will be provided in this course:

- What is Ancient Philosophy?
- Plato, The Gorgias: Rhetoric, Wisdom, and Knowledge
- Plato, The Republic: the Theory of the Forms
- Plato, The Republic: The Rule of Wisdom
- Aristotle: From Experience and Change to Wisdom
- Aristotle: On the Good Life and Politics
- Aristotle: God, Contemplation, and the Best Life
- Epicurus: The Pleasant Life
- Epictetus: Piety, Duty, and Apathy
- Plotinus: Three Hypostases and the Ascent of the Soul
- Augustine: Christianity and Ancient Philosophy
- Retrospective: Loving Wisdom in the Ancient World

Texts for the Course:

1. Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation: An Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, Fourth Edition (McGraw-Hill, 2002). You can easily find the parallel passages in the most recent edition, Eighth Edition (Oxford University Press, 2018).

2. Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, Trans. M. Chase (Harvard: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).

What is Ancient Philosophy?

Reading: Hadot, chapters 1-3.

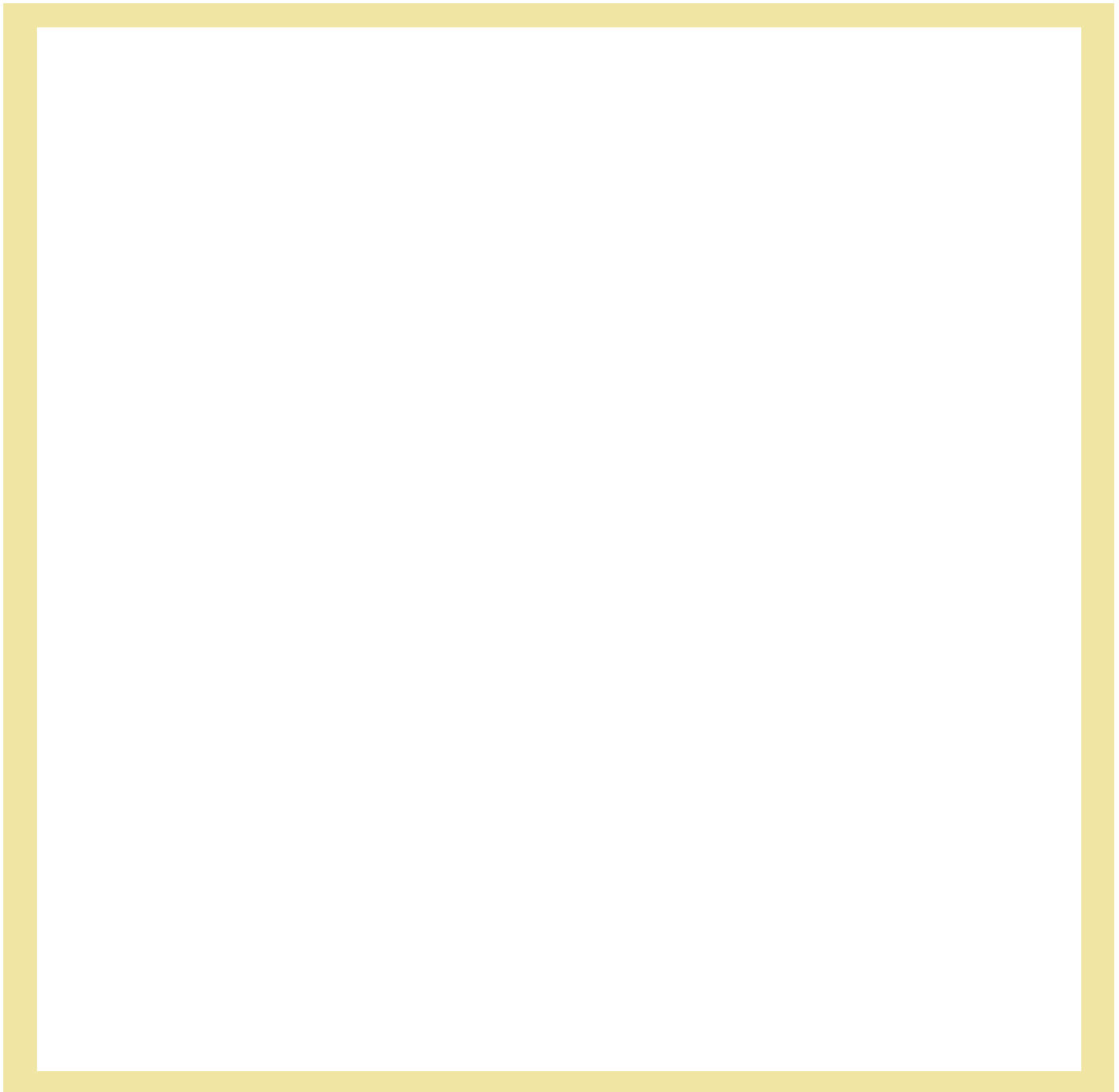
What is the origin of ancient philosophy?

What is the central, unifying theme of ancient philosophy?

Why is ancient philosophy still relevant today?

What is Ancient Philosophy?

Notes:



Plato and the Gorgias: Rhetoric, Wisdom, and Knowledge

Reading: Melchert, pp. 44-48 and chapter 4.

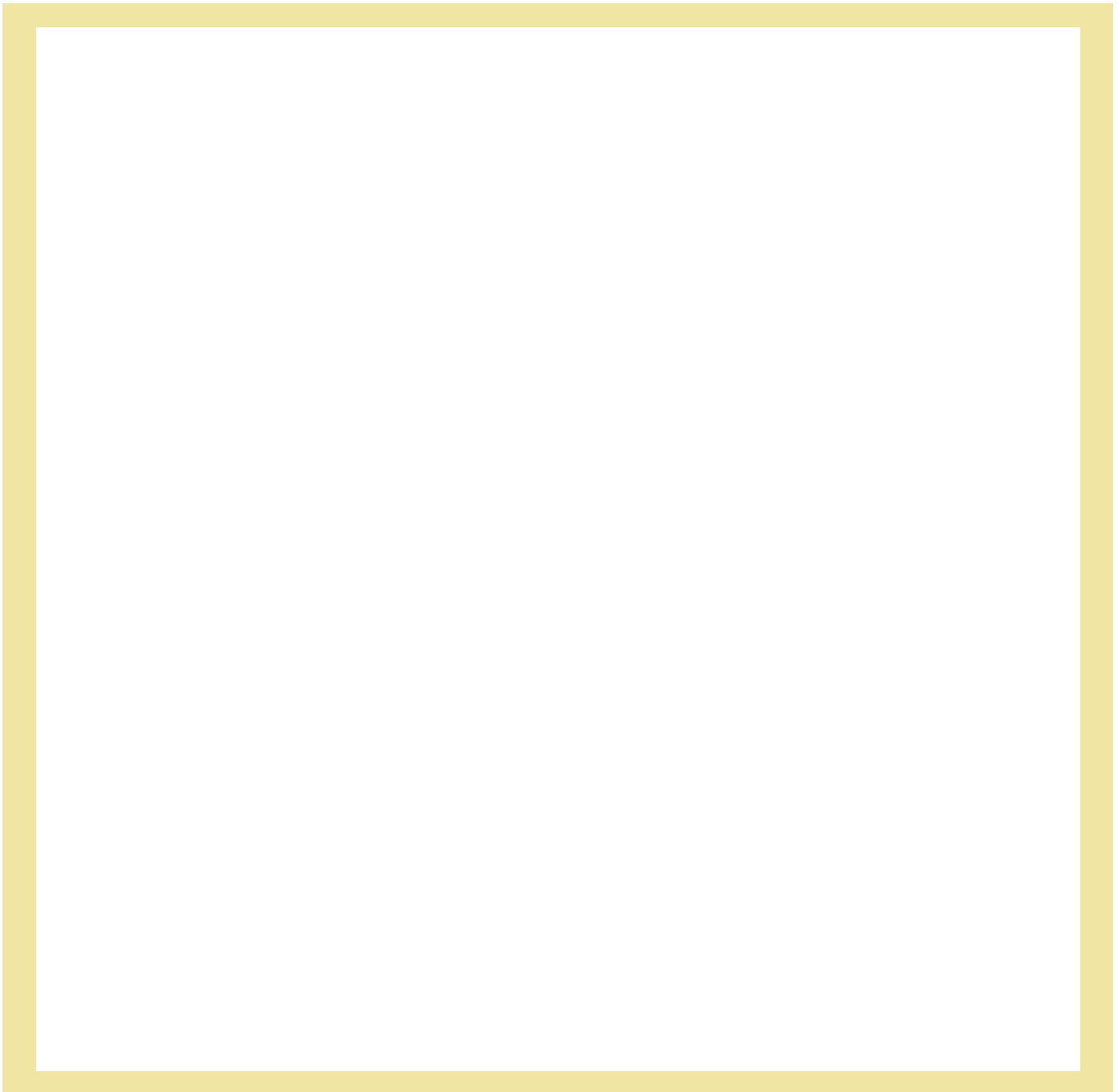
What is rhetoric? Why is it important?

How do we distinguish between rhetoric and knowledge?

Why is the inadequacy of rhetoric important? What does it reveal about the human condition?

Plato and the Gorgias: Rhetoric, Wisdom, and Knowledge

Notes:



Plato and the Republic: The Theory of the Forms

Reading: Melchert, pp. 117-133.

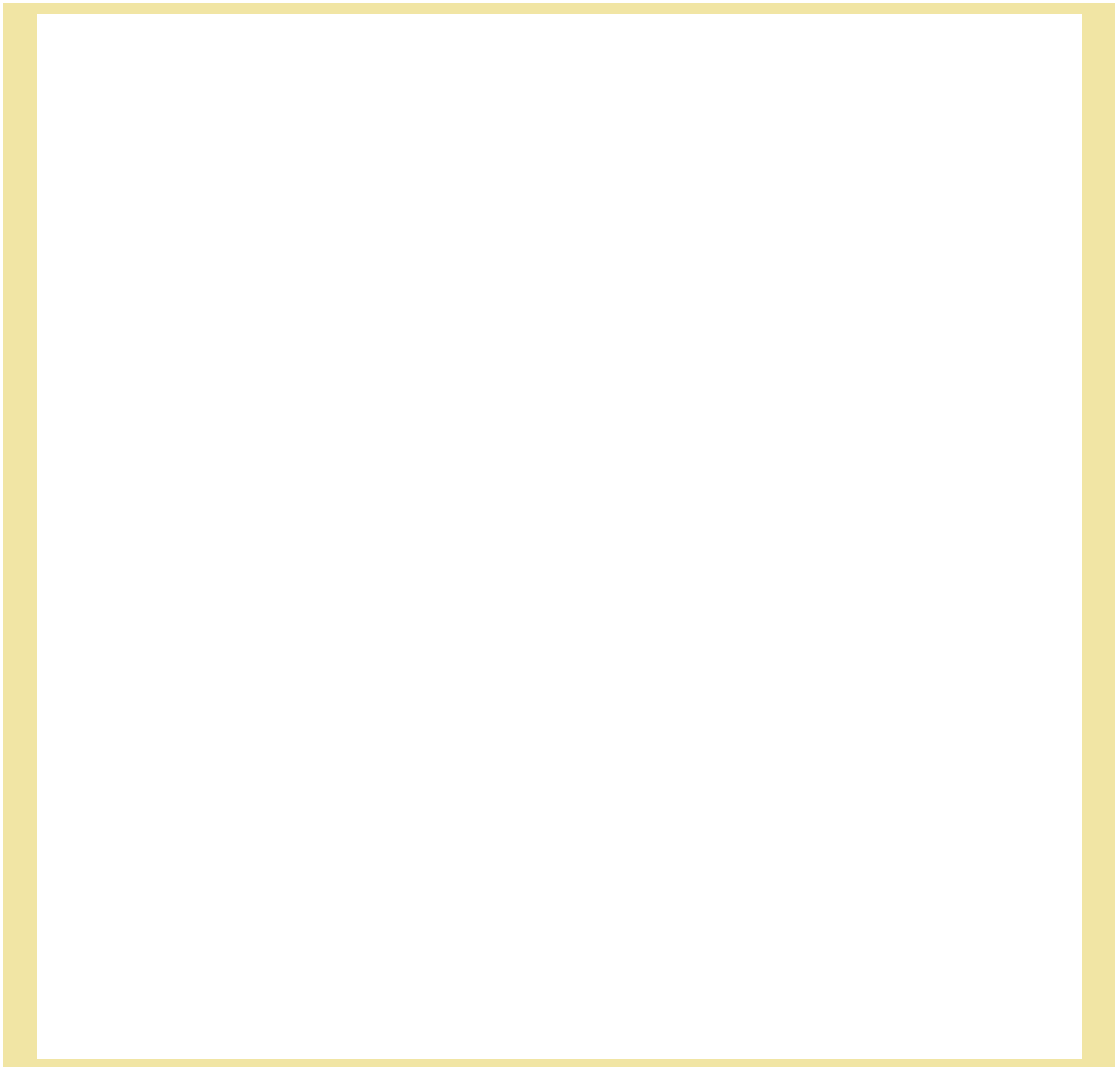
What is the connection between theory of the forms and wisdom?

How does the theory of the form contradict relativism?

What is the central argument for the theory of the forms?

Plato and the Republic: The Theory of the Forms

Notes:



Plato and the Republic: The Rule of Wisdom

Reading: Melchert, pp. 134-152.

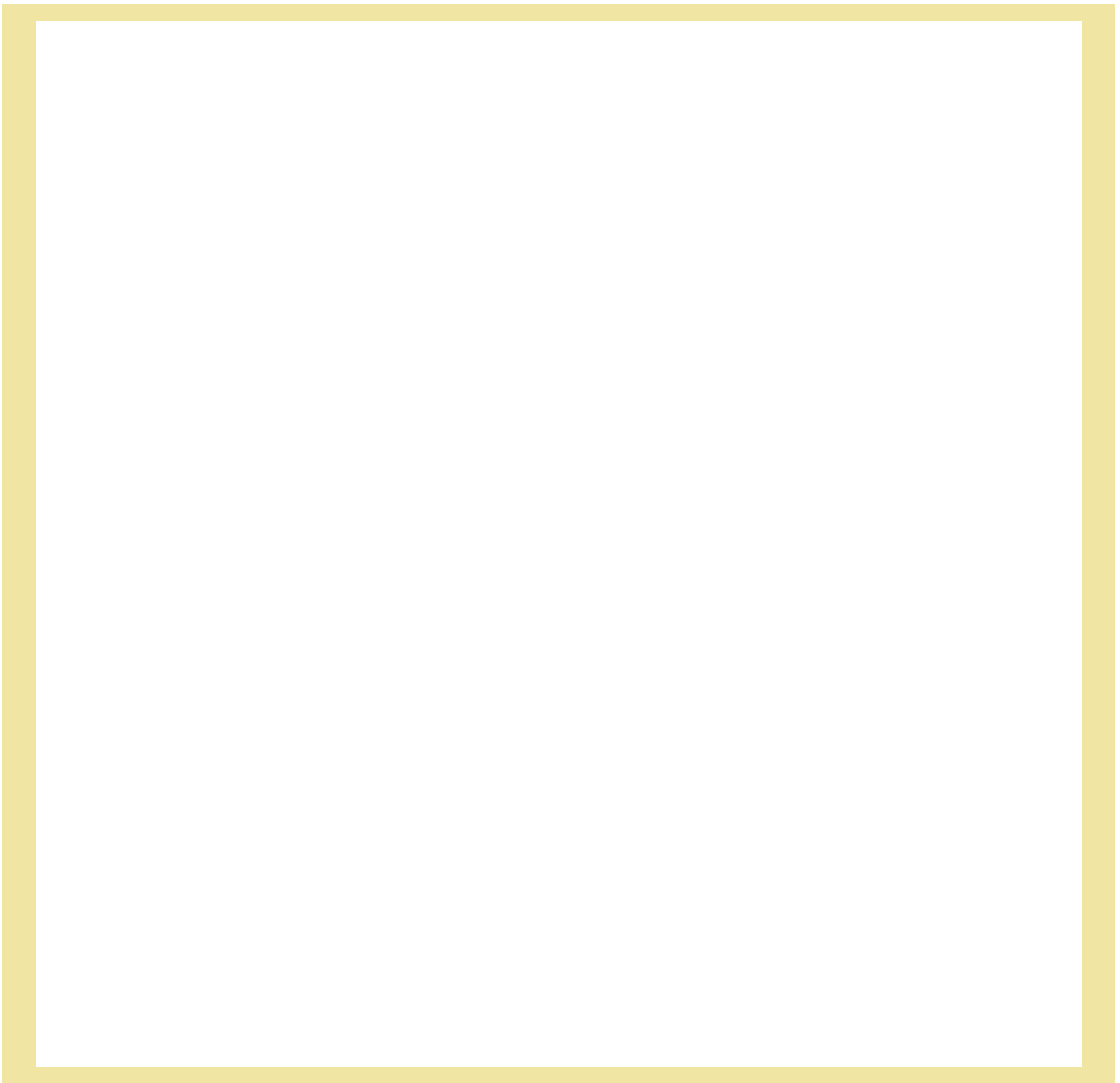
What is the connection of justice and wisdom?

Why should the wise rule?

What are some of the problems of democracy?

Plato and the Republic: The Rule of Wisdom

Notes:



Aristotle: From Experience and Change to Wisdom

Reading: Melchert, pp. 169-180.

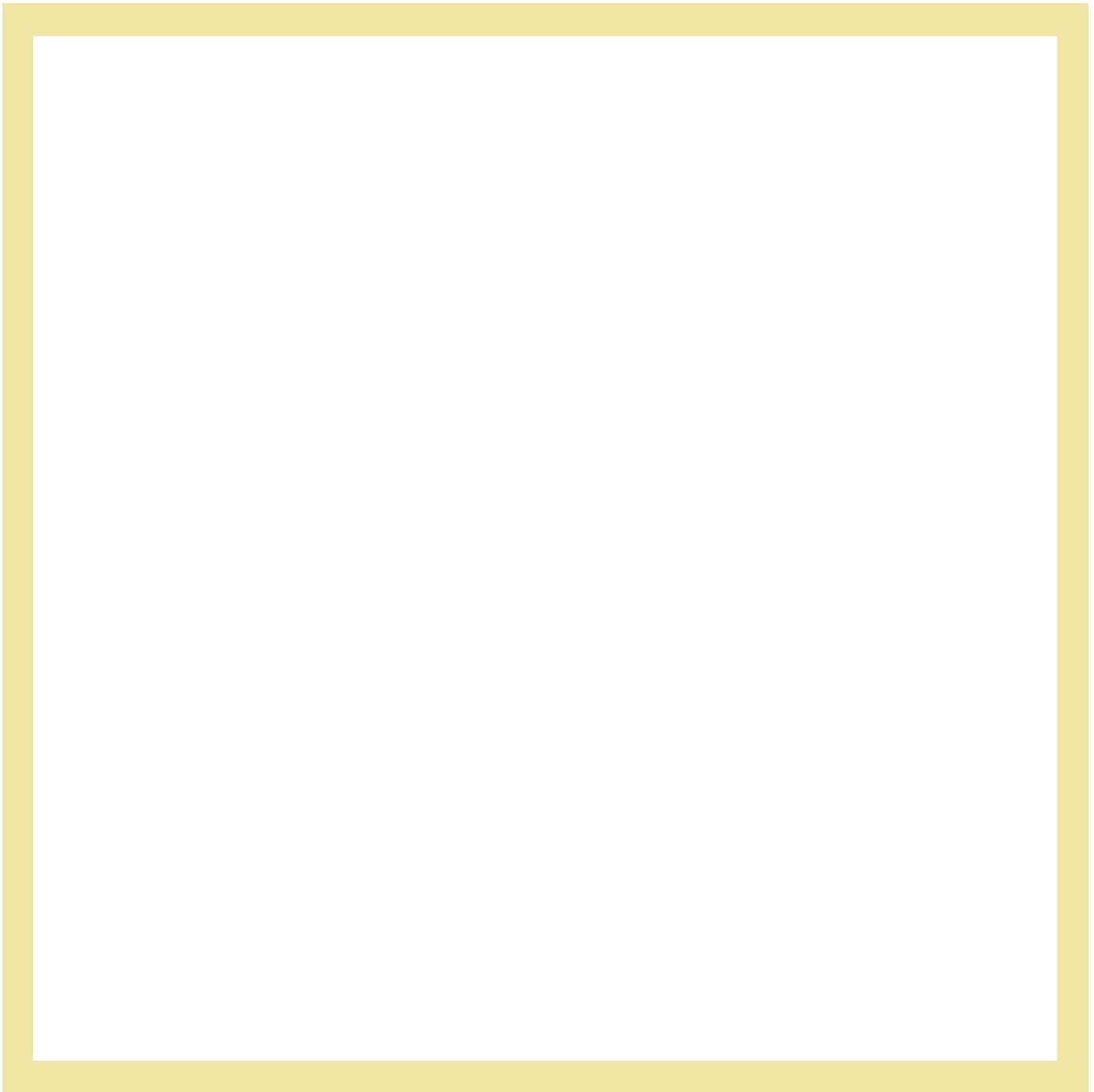
How does Aristotle challenge and revise Plato's theory of the forms?

What is the role of form in Aristotle's philosophy?

What is the ultimate source of form?

Aristotle: From Experience and Change to Wisdom

Notes:



Aristotle: On the Good Life and Politics

Reading: Melchert, pp. 186-199.

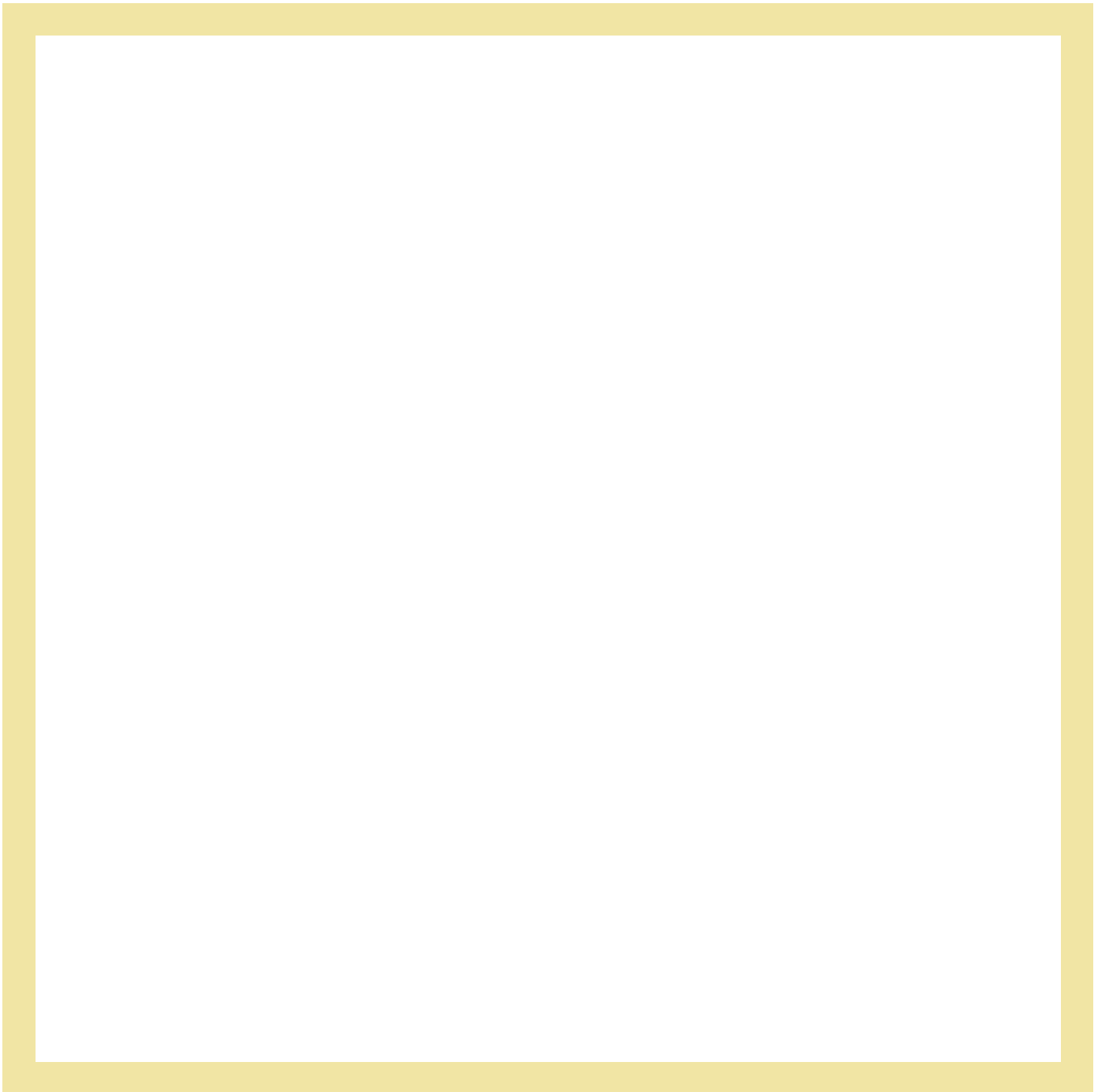
Why is form important for understanding ethics?

What is the definition of human nature?

What is the good life for the human person?

Aristotle: On the Good Life and Politics

Notes:



Aristotle: God, Contemplation, and the Best Life

Reading: Hadot, chapter 6.

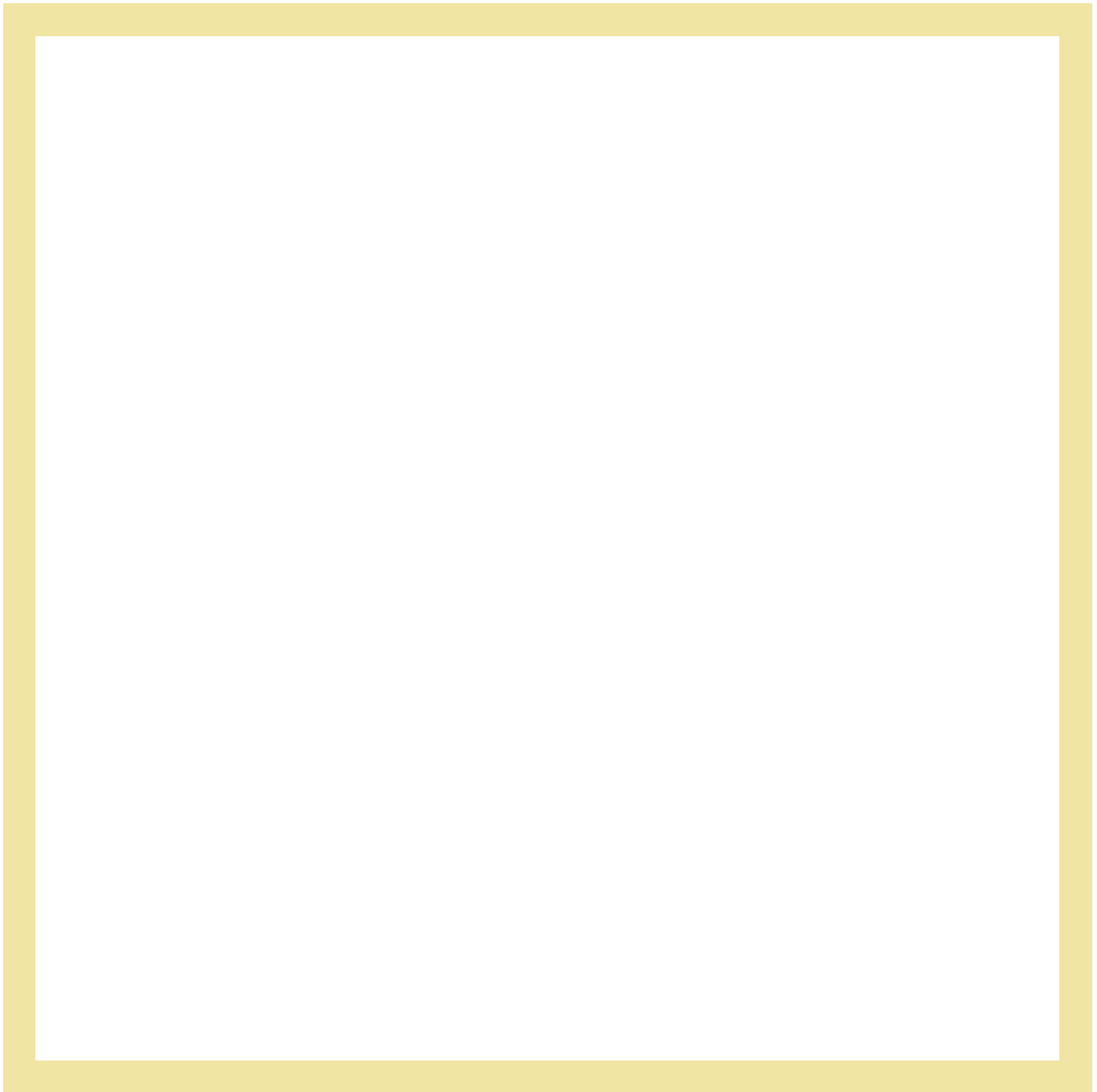
Whether there is anything beyond politics.

What is contemplation?

Why is contemplation the best life for man?

Aristotle: God, Contemplation, and the Best Life

Notes:



Epicurus: The Pleasant Life

Reading: Melchert, pp 201-205; Hadot 113-126.

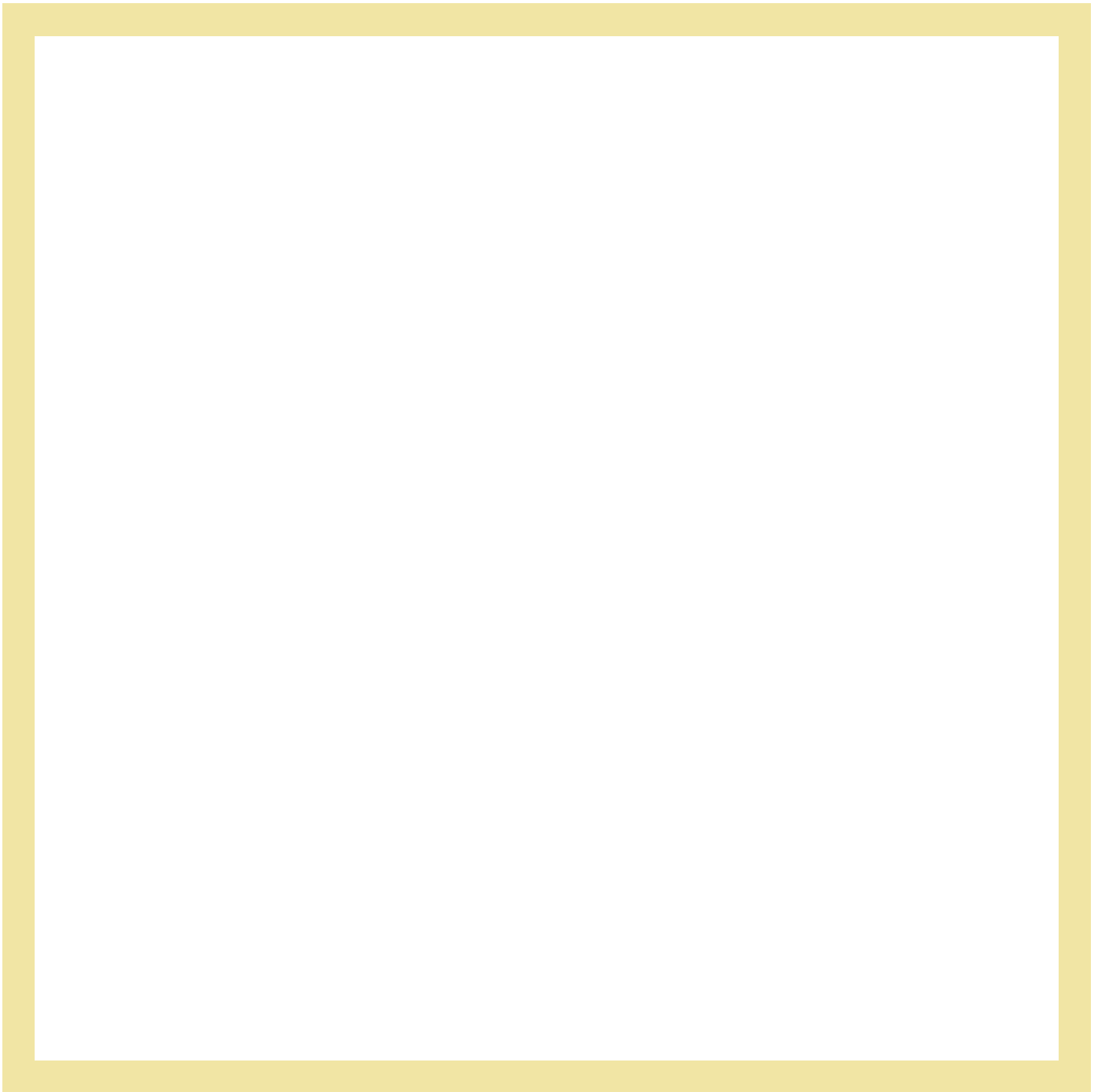
What is the connection of happiness and pleasure?

What are the important divisions of pleasure?

What are is problematic about Epicureanism?

Epicurus: The Pleasant Life

Notes:



Epictetus: Piety, Duty, and Apathy

Reading: Melchert, 206-210; Hadot 126-139.

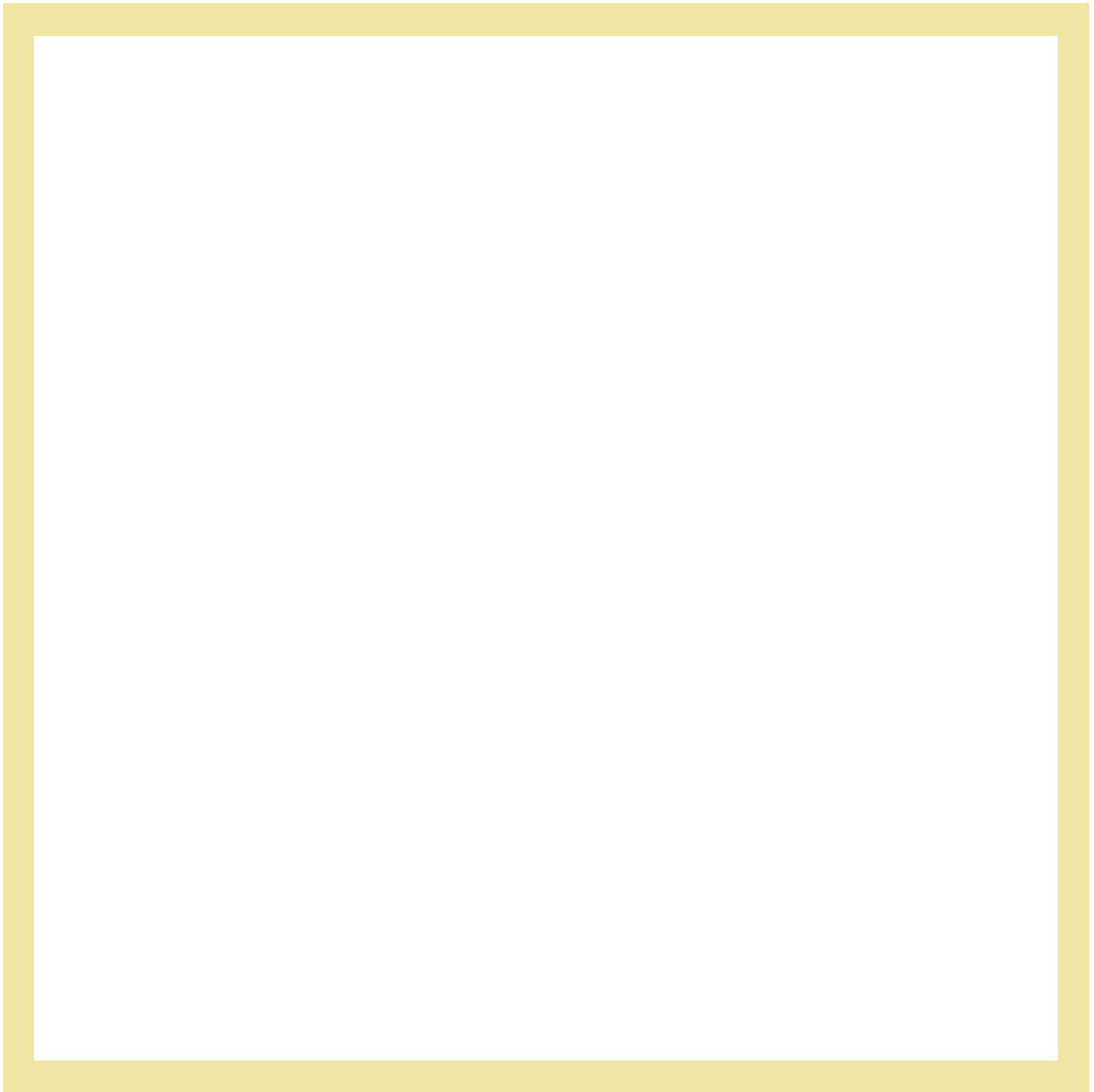
What is the ultimate principle of reality?

What is apathy? Why is it important?

What is duty? Why is it important?

Epictetus: Piety, Duty, and Apathy

Notes:



Plotinus: Three Hypostases and the Ascent of the Soul

Reading: Hadot, 157-168.

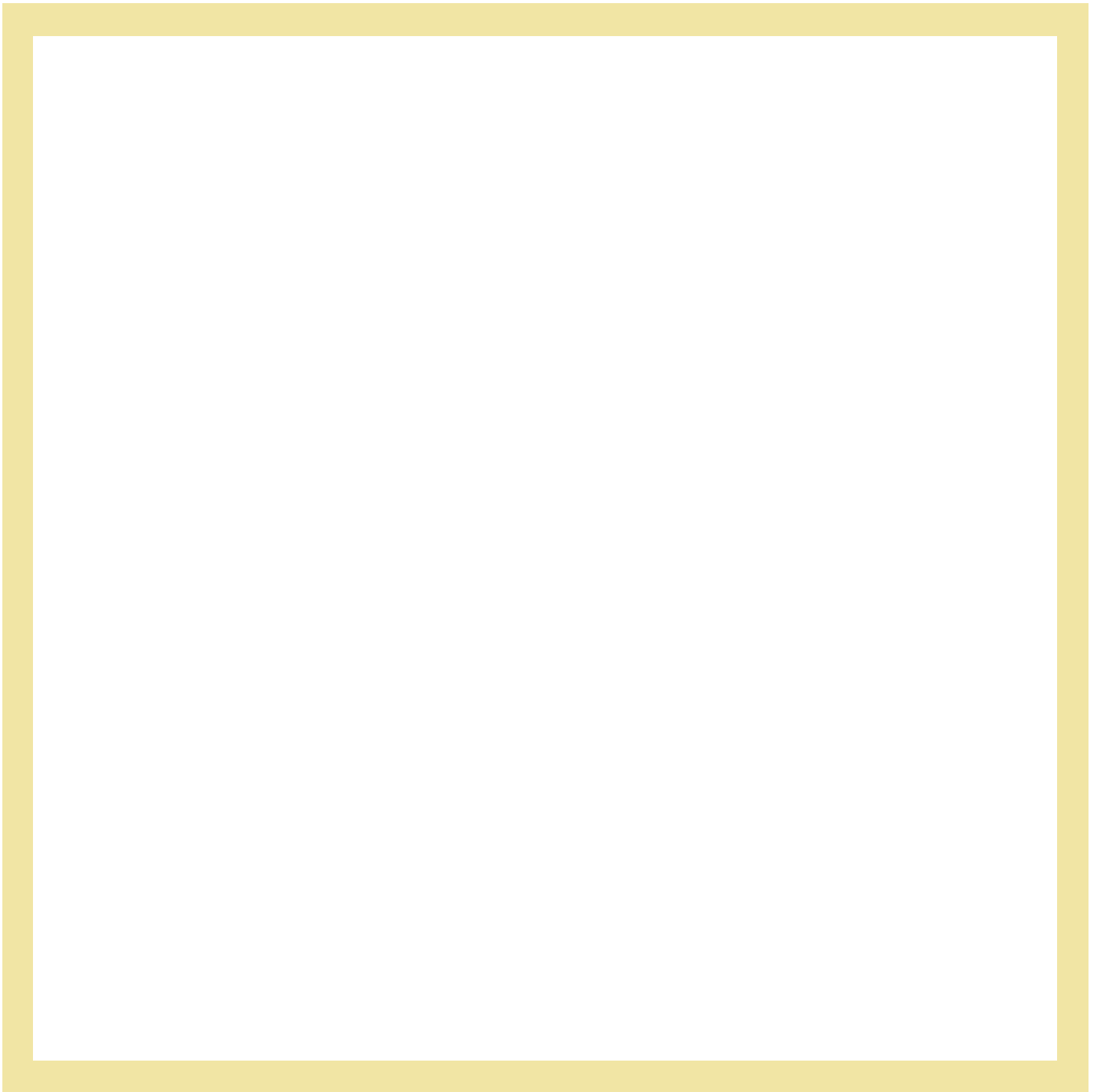
What is the soul?

How does the soul discover the three sources? What are the three sources above soul?

How does the soul return to itself?

Plotinus: Three Hypostases and the Ascent of the Soul

Notes:



Augustine: Christianity and Ancient Philosophy

Reading: Melchert c. 10.

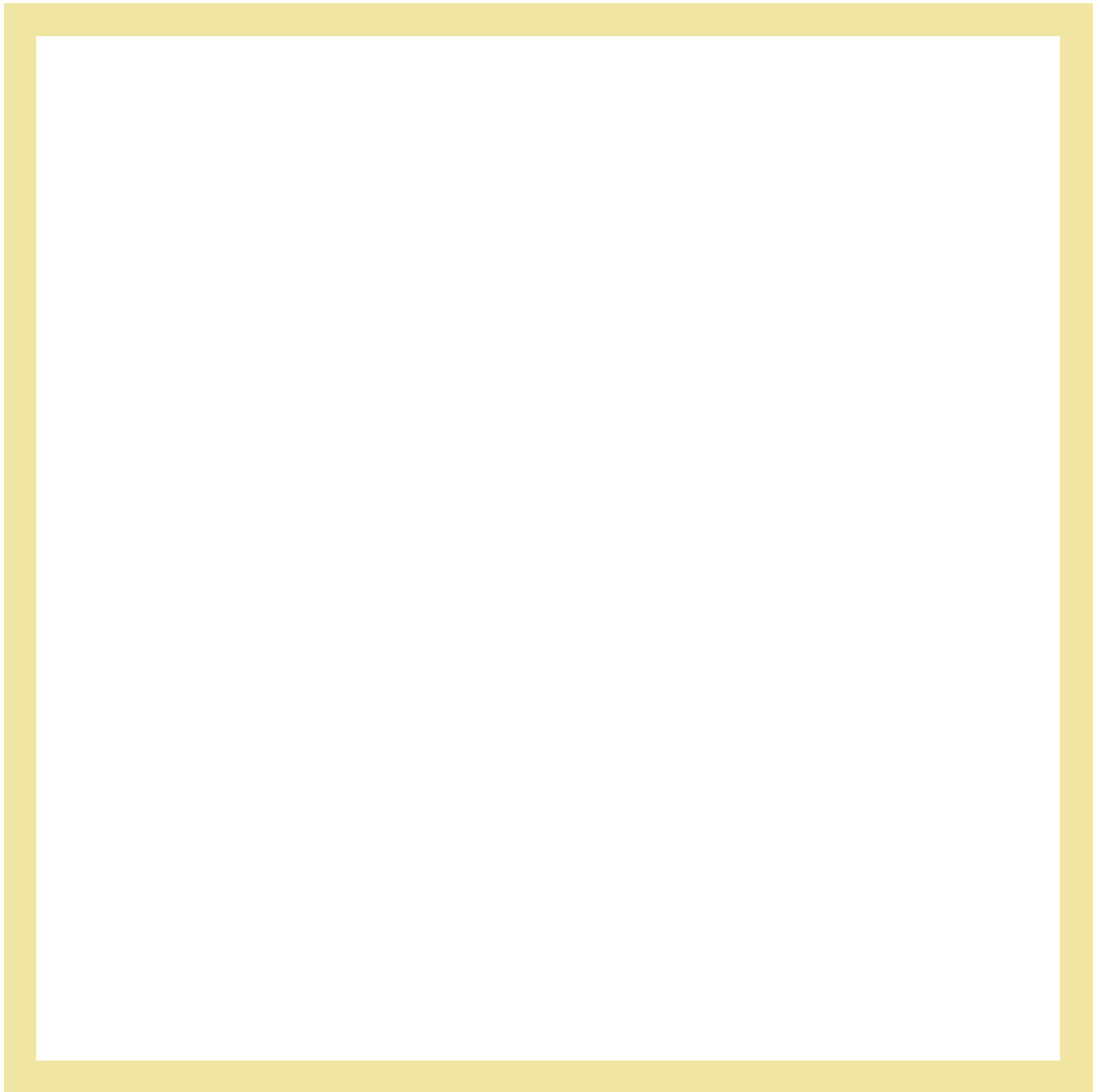
What is the relationship of Augustine to Ancient Philosophy?

What are the central doctrines of Augustine's Christian philosophy?

Why is Augustine's philosophy important?

Augustine: Christianity and Ancient Philosophy

Notes:



Retrospective: Loving Wisdom in the Ancient World

Reading: Hadot, c. 10.

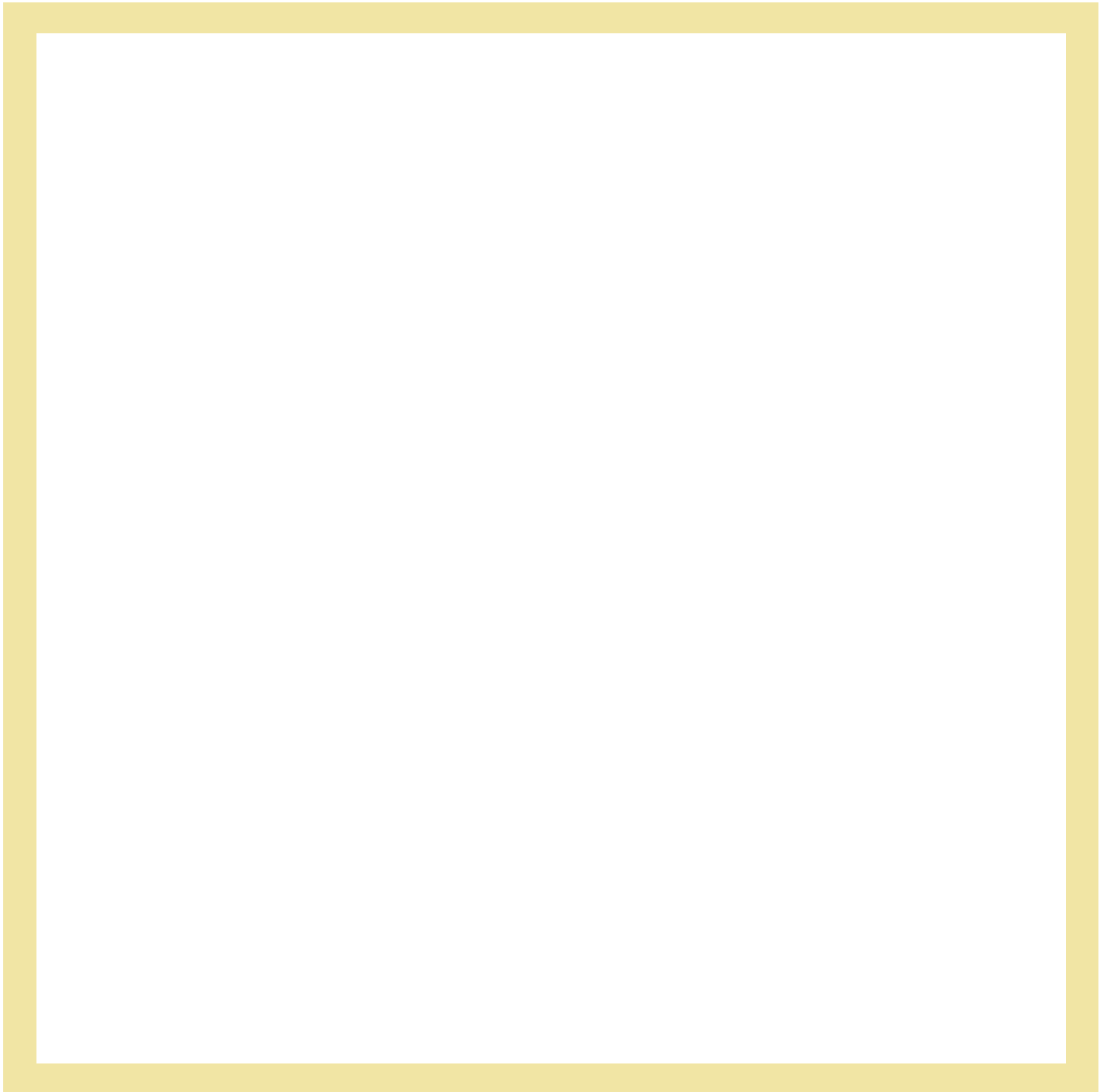
What are the most important discoveries of ancient philosophy?

Whether ancient philosophy continues to be relevant?

What happened to ancient philosophy after the ancient world ended?

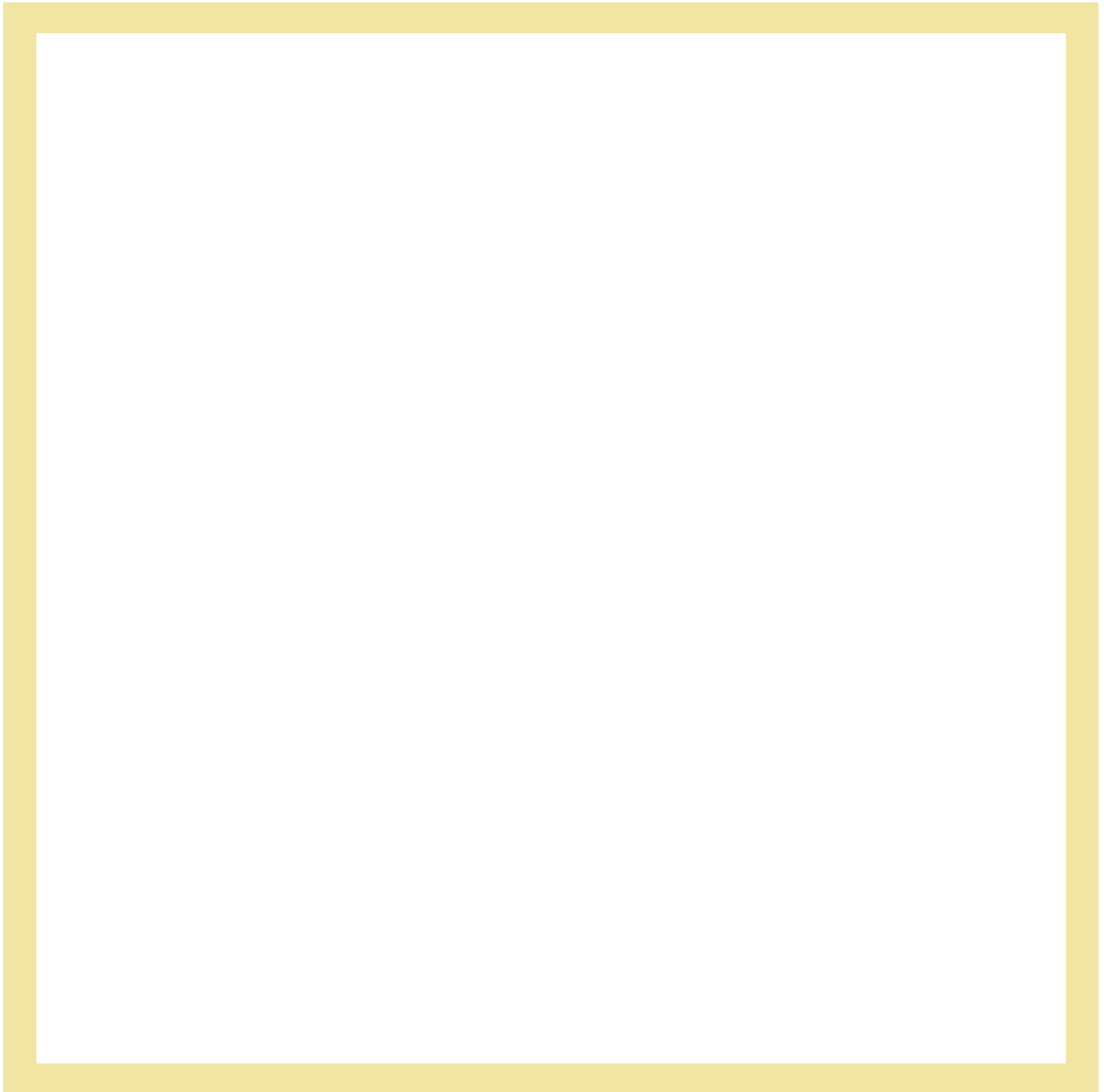
Retrospective: Loving Wisdom in the Ancient World

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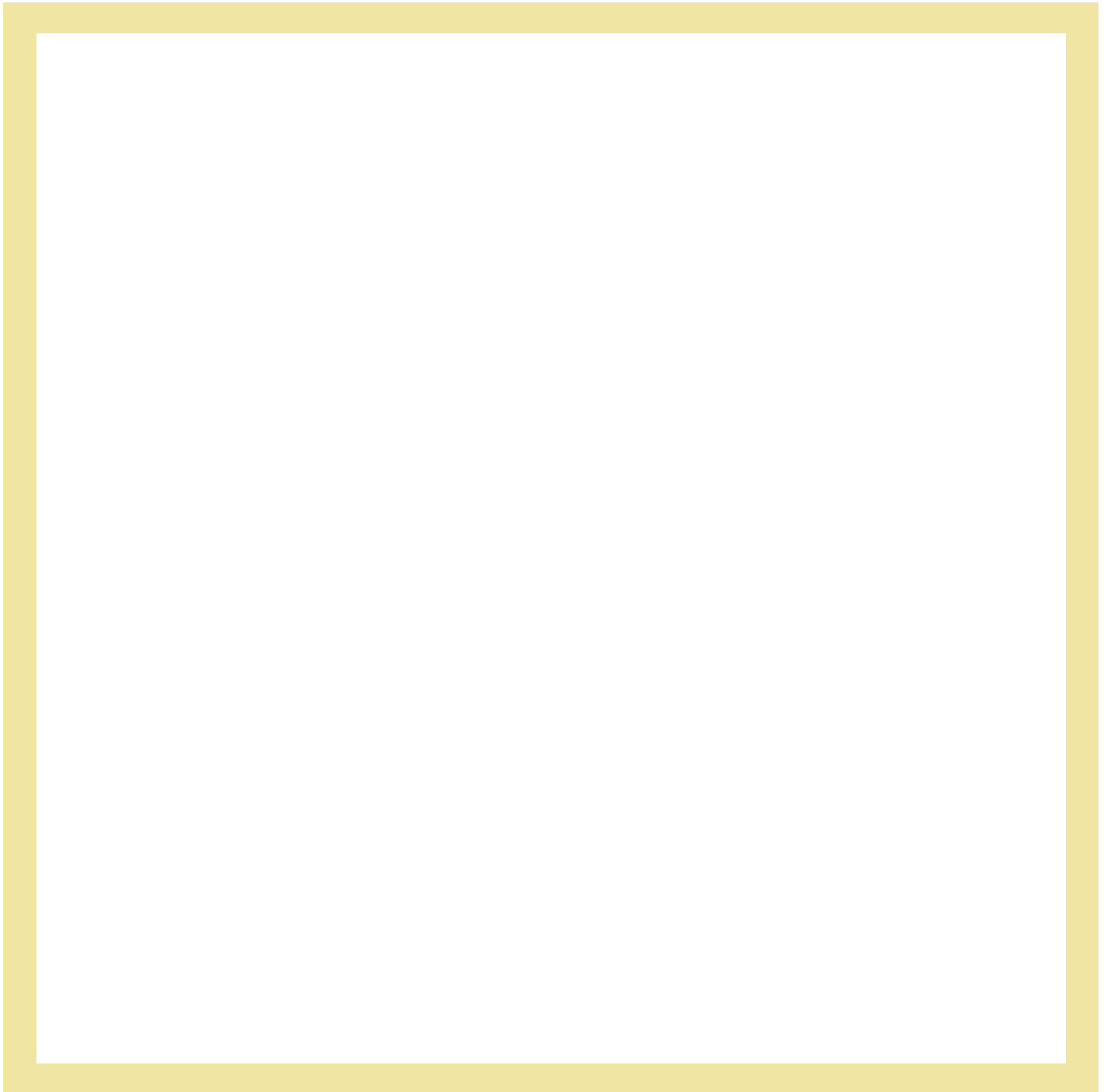
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