

Metaphysics

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CATHOLIC STUDIES
ACADEMY



Metaphysics

Syllabus & Objectives

Metaphysics

Metaphysics is the science of being as being. It is the most abstract and difficult branch of philosophy, but also the most rewarding because it involves our ultimate interpretation of reality. In this course students will be introduced to the classical interpretation of reality along with alternative modern interpretations. Students will be equipped to:

- demonstrate familiarity with the major metaphysical theories including monism, dualism, moderate realism, nominalism, materialism, radical idealism, pessimism, et cetera.
- define the core ideas of classical metaphysics including essence, existence, truth, goodness, and beauty
- demonstrate and explain the reality of essences, the real distinction of existence and essence, and the existence of the first cause of being
- identify and critique key metaphysical ideas that continue to impact contemporary culture.

Metaphysics

Lectures and Recommended Readings

The following lectures will be provided in this course:

- I. General Introduction to Metaphysics
- II. Monism and Atomism: Instructive Failures
- III. The Science of Being according to Thomas Aquinas
- IV. Substance
- V. Essence
- VI. Universals
- VII. Existence and the Real Distinction
- VIII. God is the First Cause of Being
- IX. Truth and Goodness
- X. Immanuel Kant, Critical Idealism, and Absolute Idealism
- XI. Heidegger, Existentialism, and Postmodernism
- XII. Retrospective: Oblivion or Luminosity

Texts for the Course:

1. Thomas Aquinas, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. James Anderson (Regnery Publishing, 1953)
2. Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation*, Fourth Edition (McGraw-Hill, 2002)
3. Ed Feser, *Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide* (One World, 2010)
4. Josef Pieper, *The Human Wisdom of St. Thomas* (Ignatius Press, 2002.)

General Introduction to Metaphysics

Suggested reading: Thomas Aquinas, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. James Anderson (Regnery Publishing, 1953), c. 1.

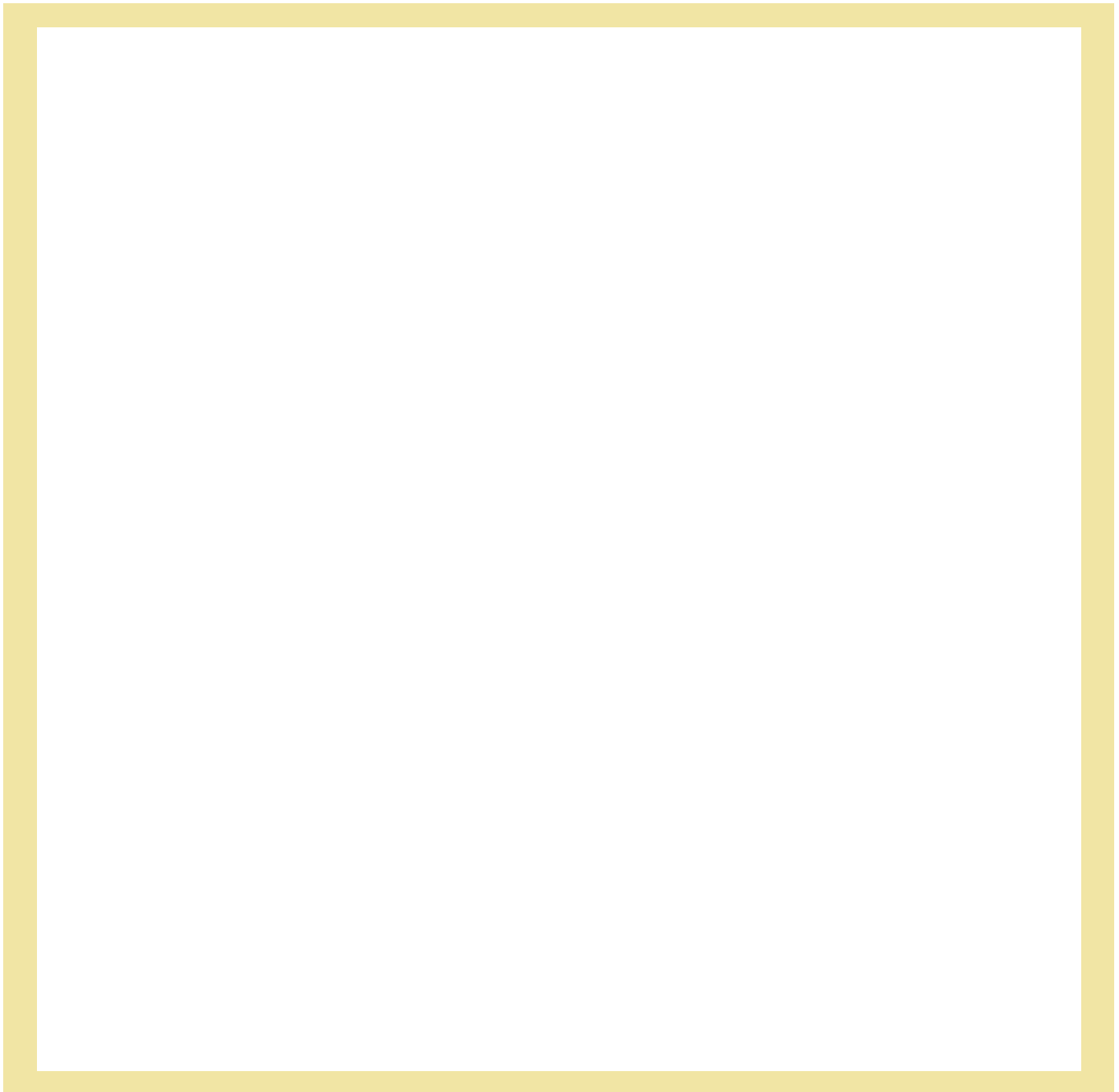
What is metaphysics?

Why is metaphysics important?

How is metaphysics related to the other branches of philosophy?

General Introduction to Metaphysics

Notes:



Monism and Atomism: Instructive Failures

Suggested reading: Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation*, Fourth Edition (McGraw-Hill, 2002), 19-28.

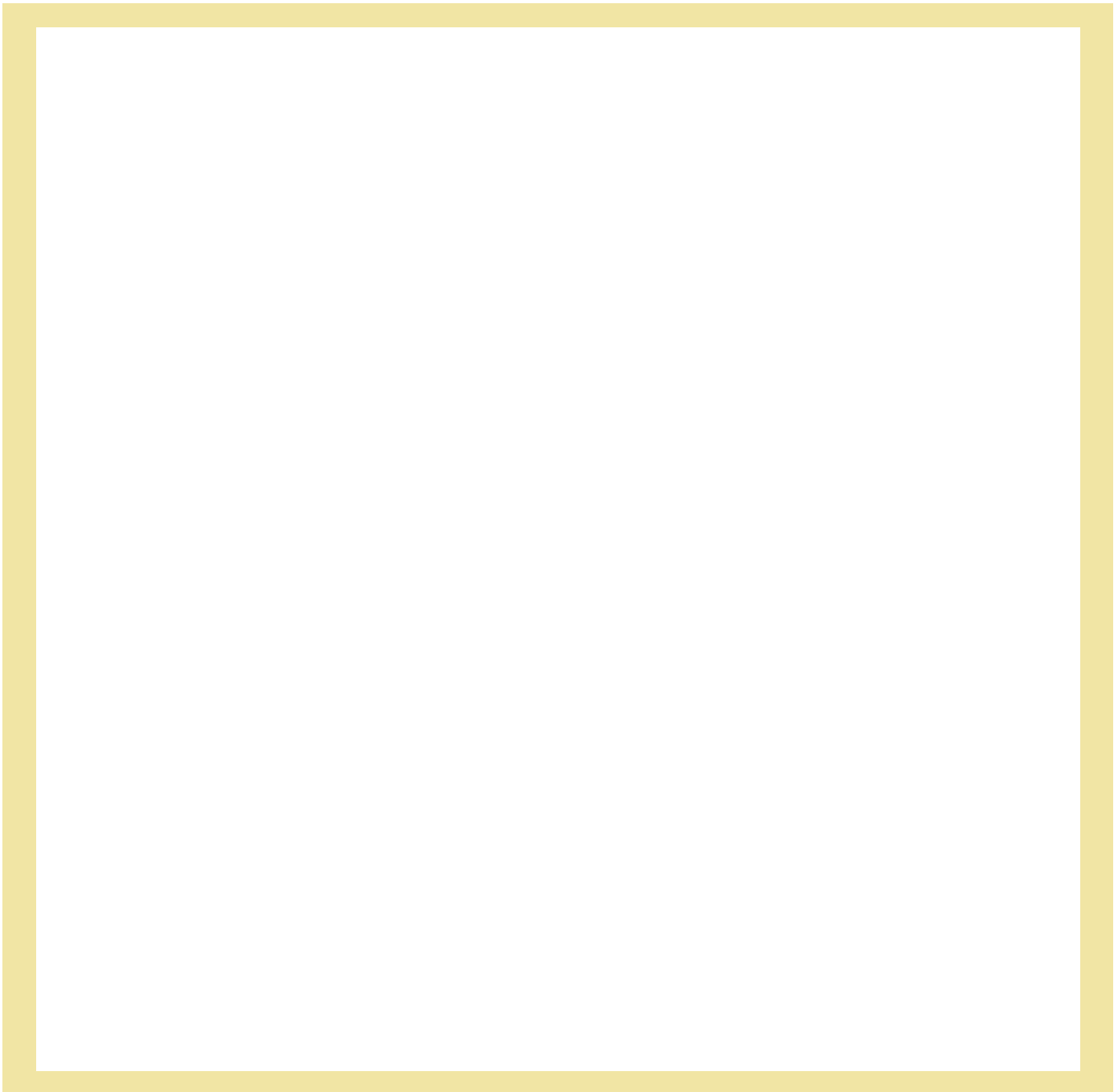
What is monism?

What is atomism?

What is the central issue considered by both monists and atomists?

Monism and Atomism: Instructive Failures

Notes:



The Science of Being according to Thomas Aquinas

Suggested reading: Thomas Aquinas, An Introduction to the Metaphysics, c. 2, section 1.

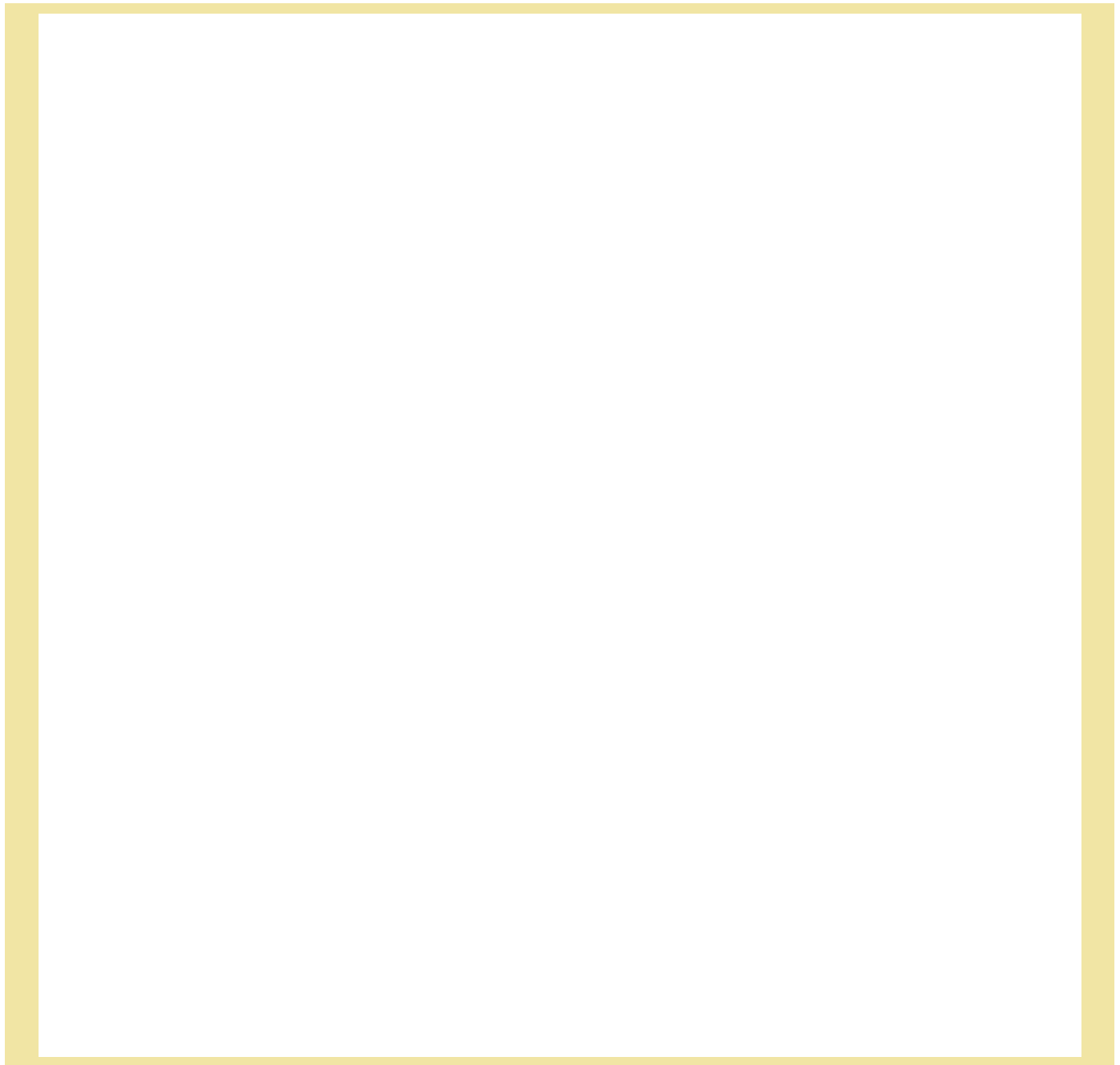
In what sense is metaphysics a science?

What is the formal object of metaphysics?

What is the material object of metaphysics?

The Science of Being according to Thomas Aquinas

Notes:



Substance

Suggested reading: Ed Feser, *Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide* (One World, 2010), 15-17.

Additional reading: Thomas Aquinas, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics*, c. 3, section 1. Thomas Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia* (c. 1). [Available online]

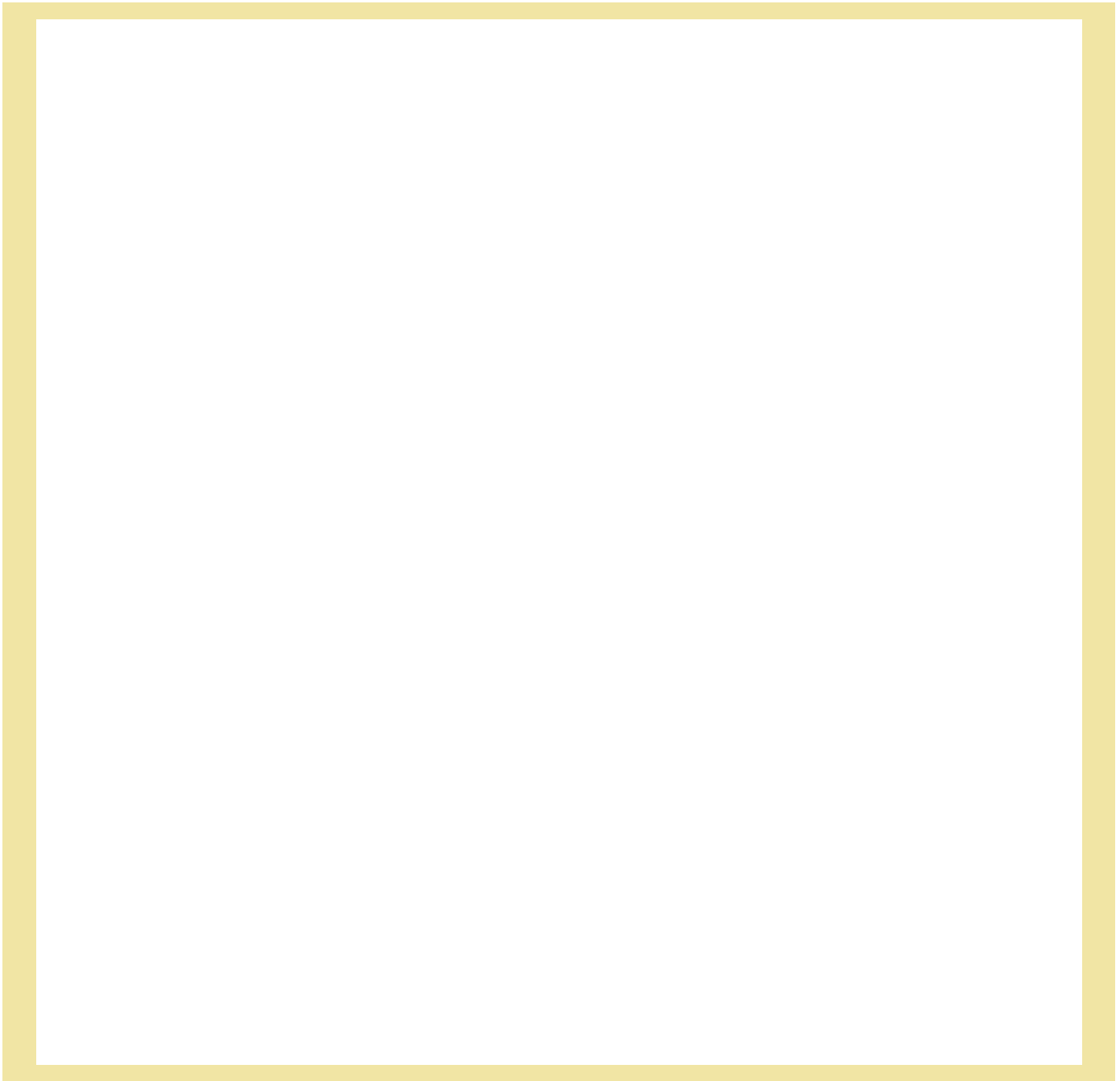
How does substance emerge from an analysis of change?

Whether substance and accidents really differ?

Why is substance important?

Substance

Notes:



Essence

Suggested reading: Thomas Aquinas, An Introduction to the Metaphysics, c. 2, section 2.

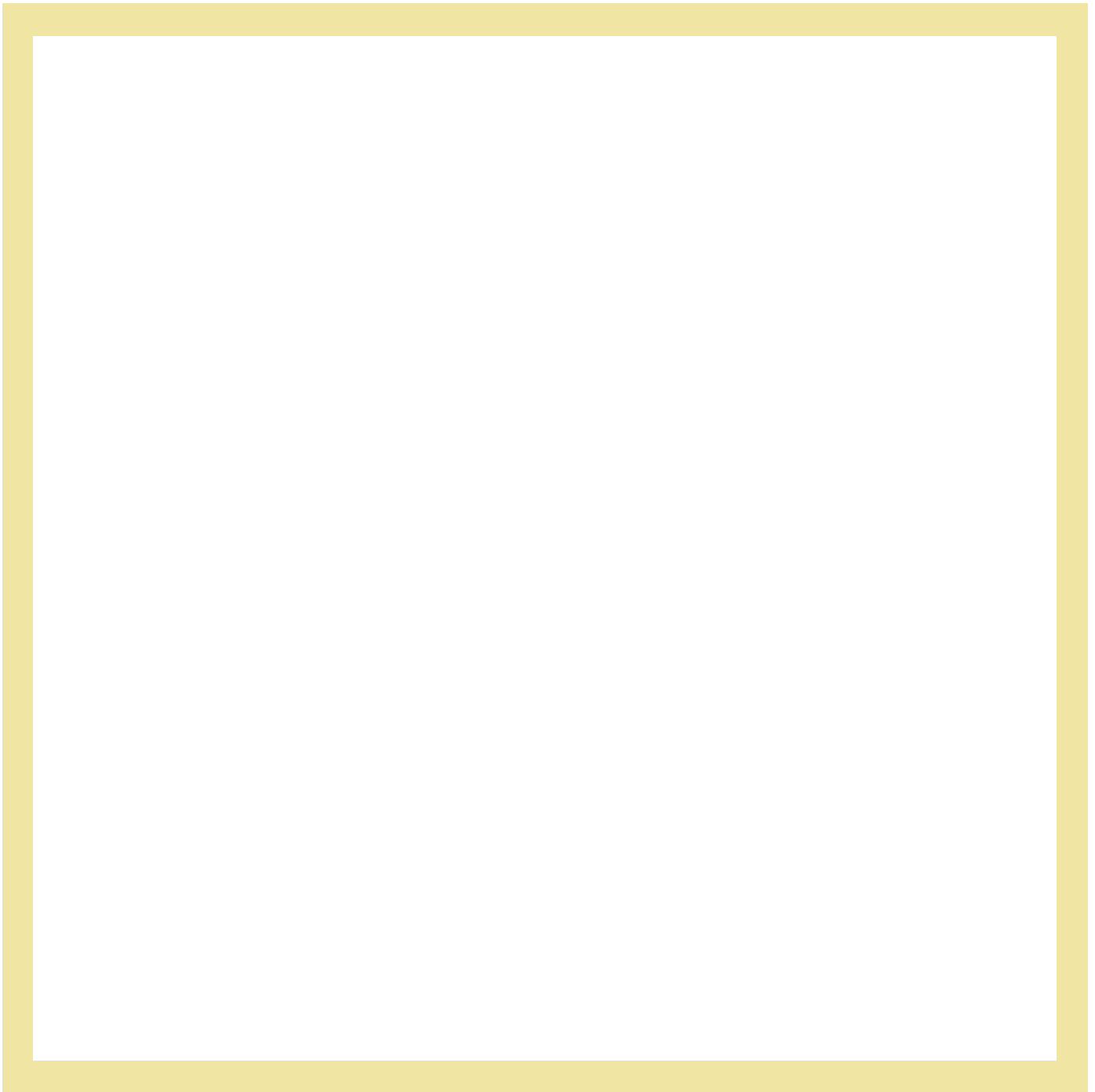
What is essence?

Whether essence subsists?

Why is essence important?

Essence

Notes:



Universals

Suggested readings: Ed Feser, 26-27, 152, 155-157.

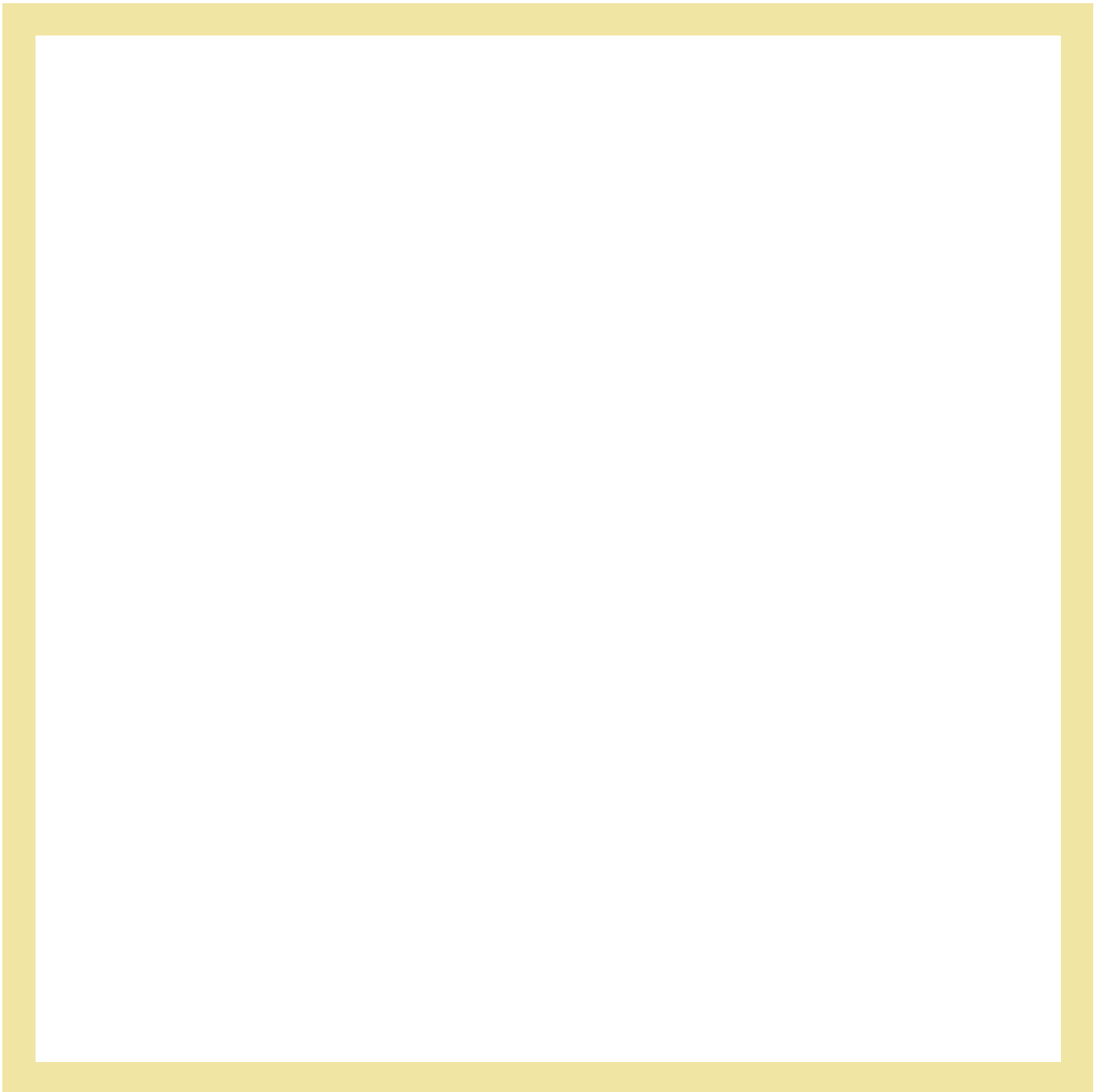
What are universals?

Whether universals are related to real essences?

Why are universals important?

Universals

Notes:



Existence and the Real Distinction

Suggested readings: An Introduction, c. 3, section 3.

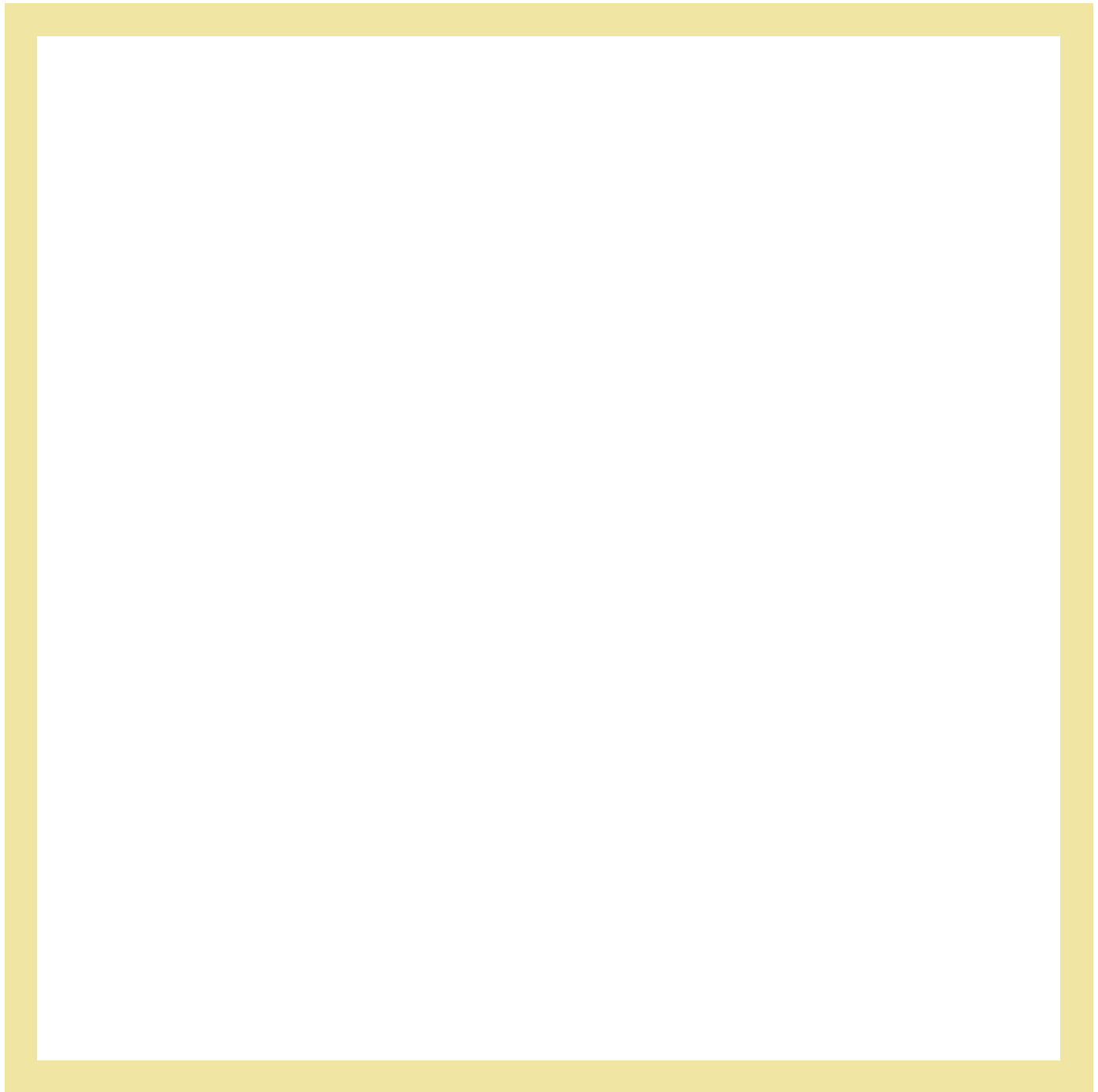
What is existence?

Whether existence and essence really differ?

Why is the real distinction important?

Existence and the Real Distinction

Notes:



God is the First Cause of Being

Suggested reading: Feser, 81-99.

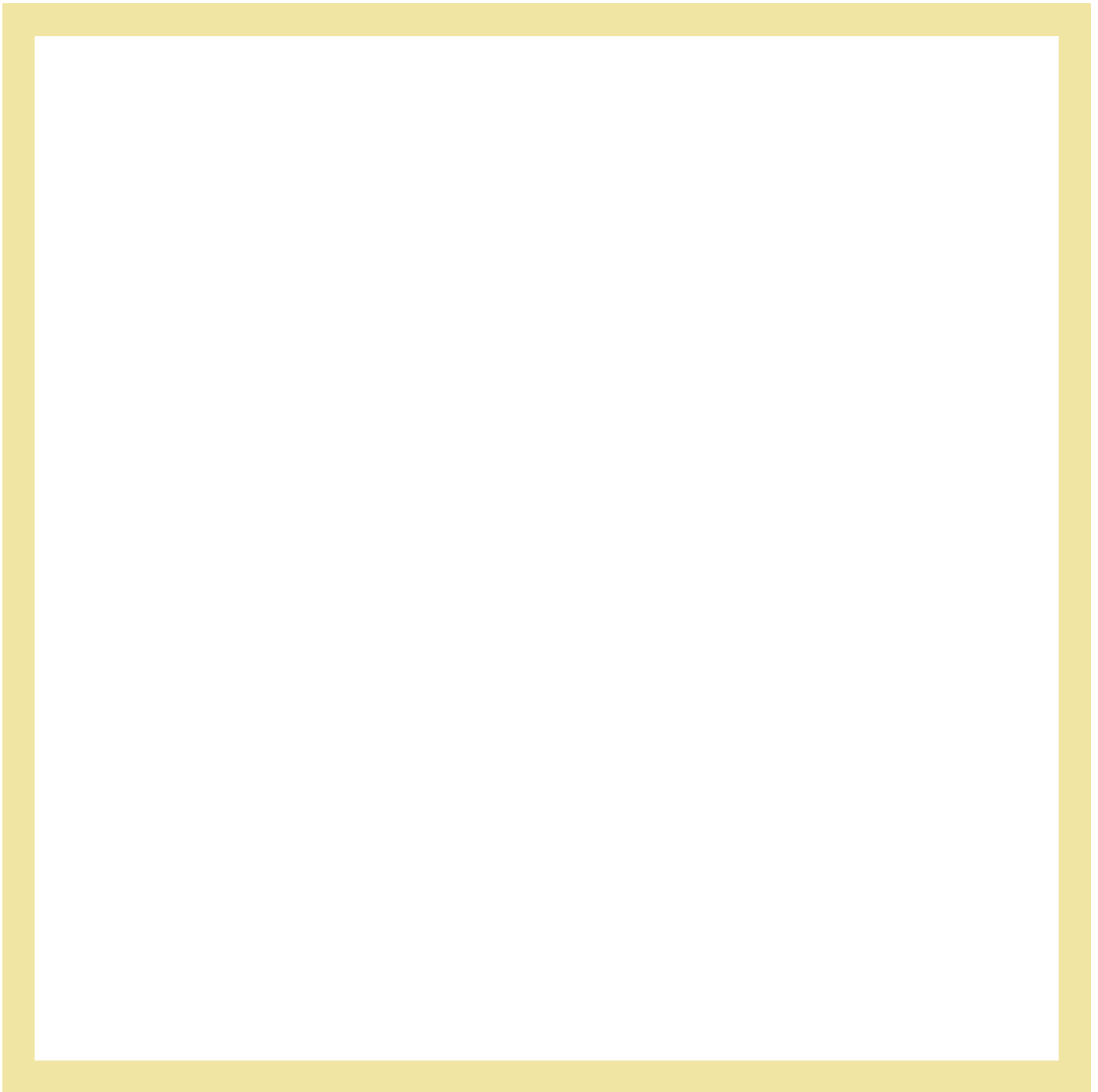
Whether in God essence and existence are identical?

Whether God is the first cause of being? How is this related to the real distinction?

Whether God preserves all things in existence?

God is the First Cause of Being

Notes:



Truth and Goodness

Suggested reading: An Introduction, chapters V, VII, VIII.

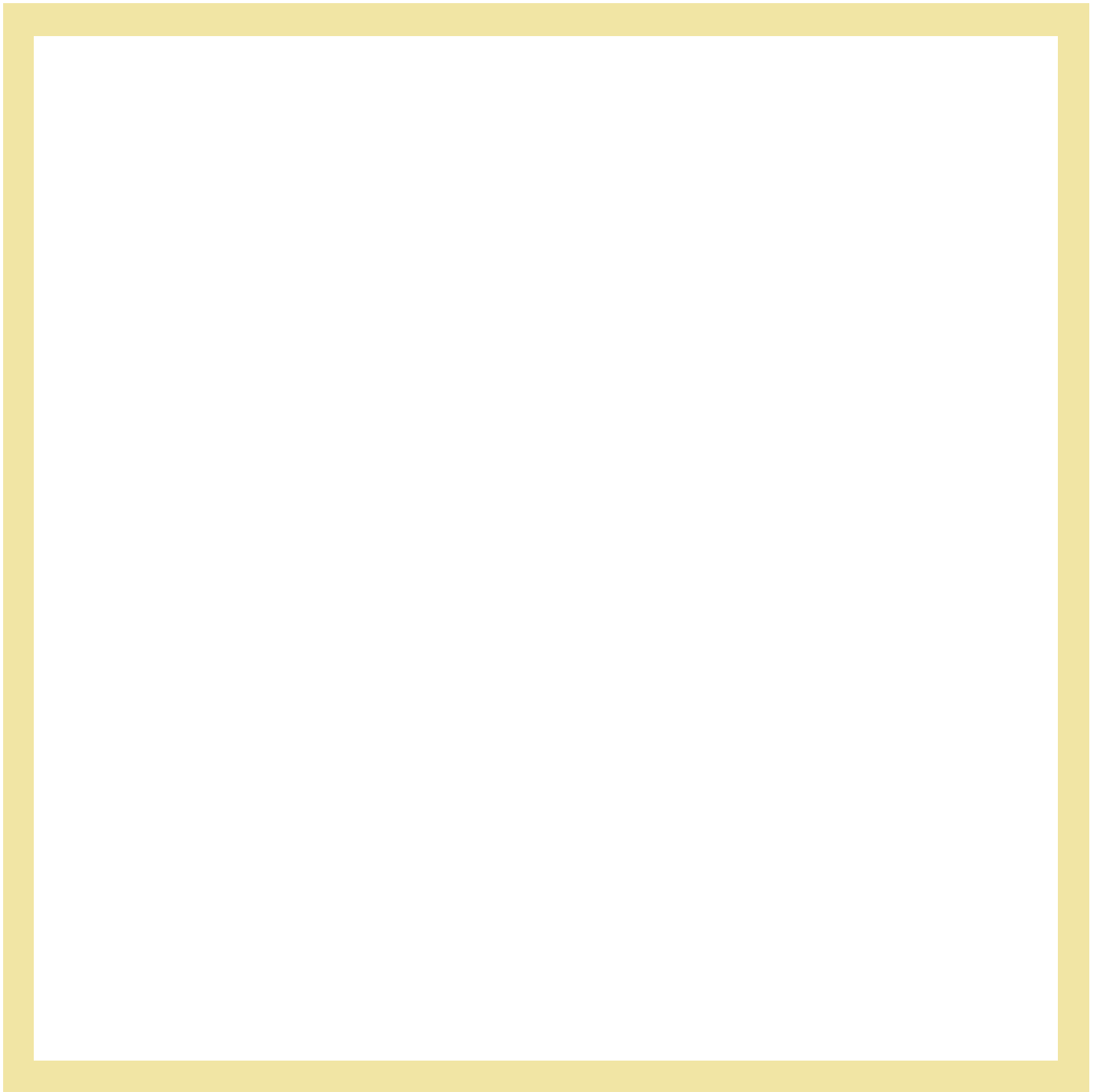
What is truth? Whether being is true?

What is goodness? Whether being is good?

What do the transcendental properties of being reveal about common being?

Truth and Goodness

Notes:



Immanuel Kant, Critical Idealism, and Absolute Idealism

Suggested reading: Melchert, pp. 431-455.

What is idealism?

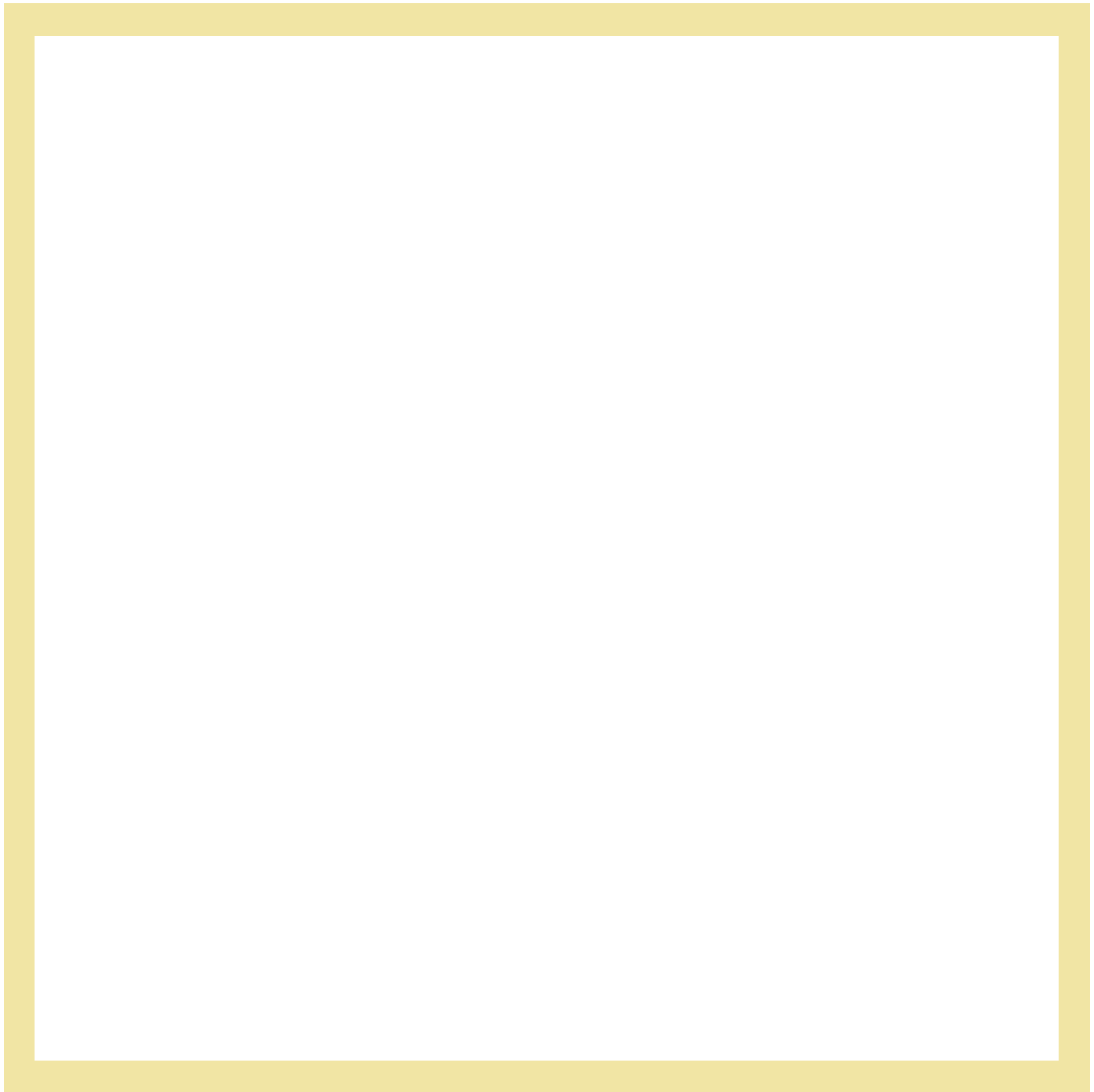
Why does Kant reject the traditional understanding of truth?

How does idealism differ from realism and absolute idealism?

What are the implications of idealism?

Immanuel Kant, Critical Idealism, and Absolute Idealism

Notes:



Heidegger, Existentialism, and Postmodernism

Suggested reading: Melchert, c. 24.

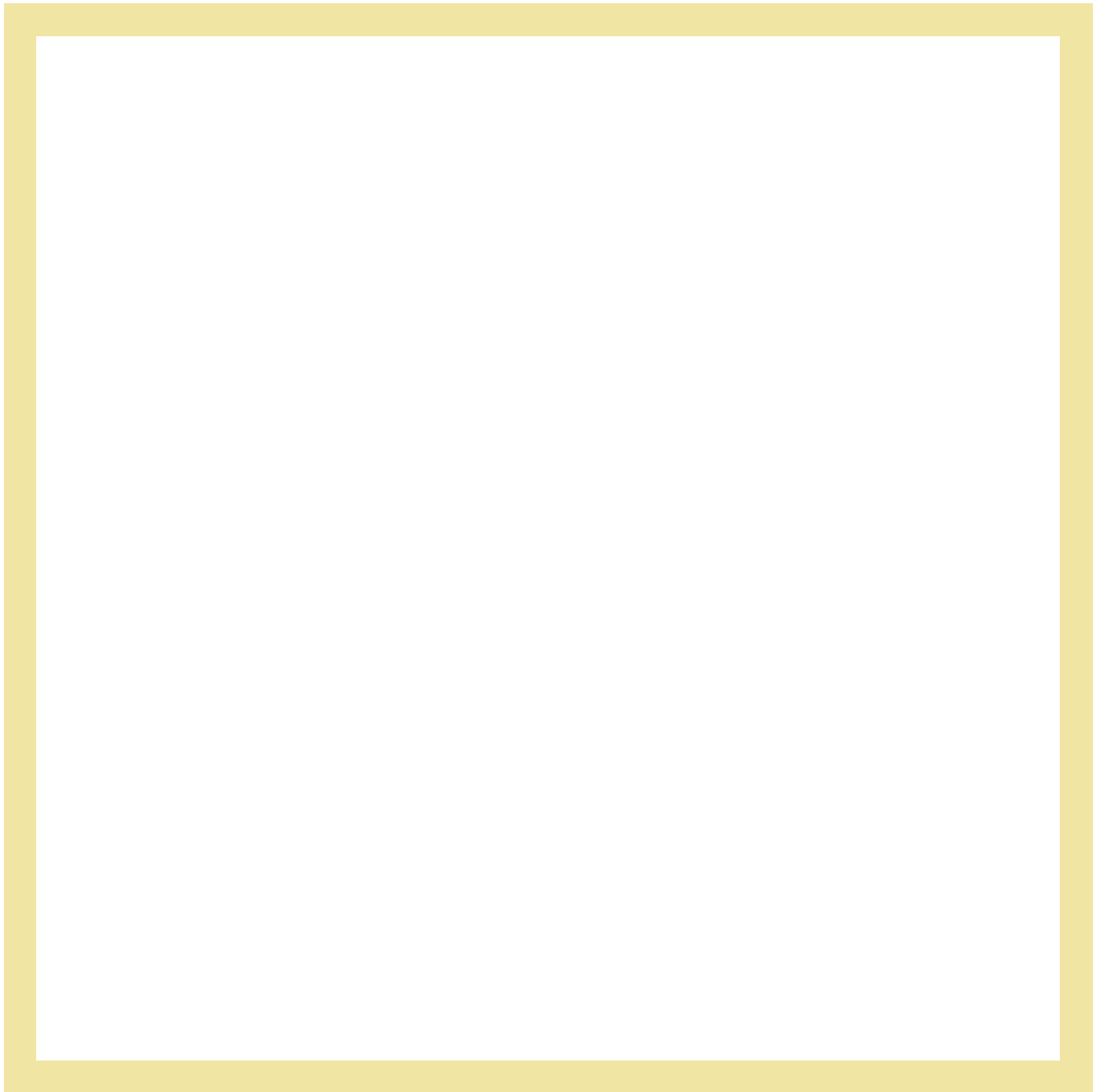
How has the history of metaphysics distorted being?

What is onto-theology?

What is the postmodern turn?

Heidegger, Existentialism, and Postmodernism

Notes:



Retrospective: Oblivion or Luminosity

Suggested reading: Josef Pieper, *The Human Wisdom of St. Thomas* (Ignatius Press), c. I-V, VI-VII.

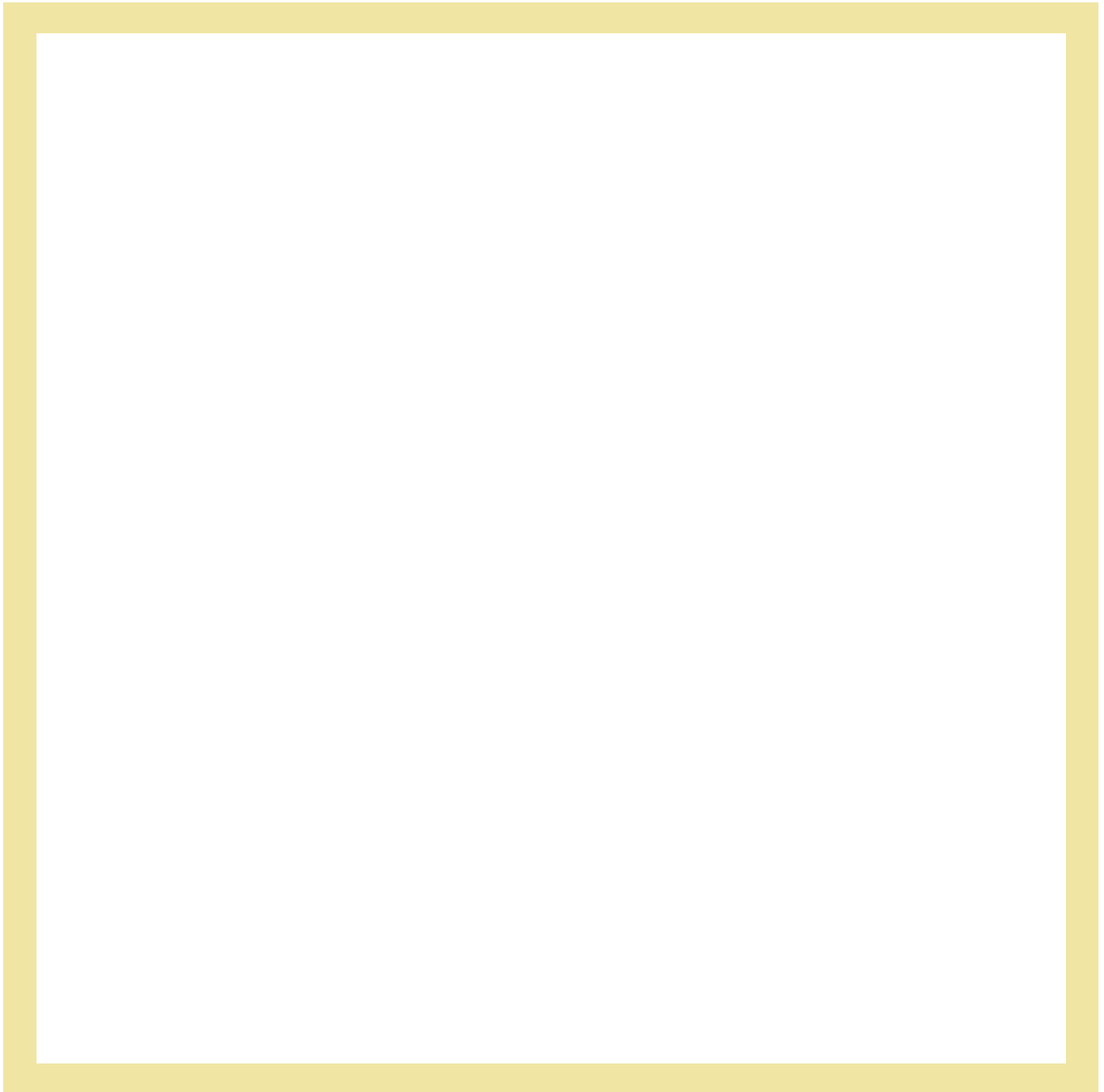
Why does modernism lead to the oblivion of being?

How does classical metaphysics disclose the luminosity of being?

What are some of the paths for recovering being?

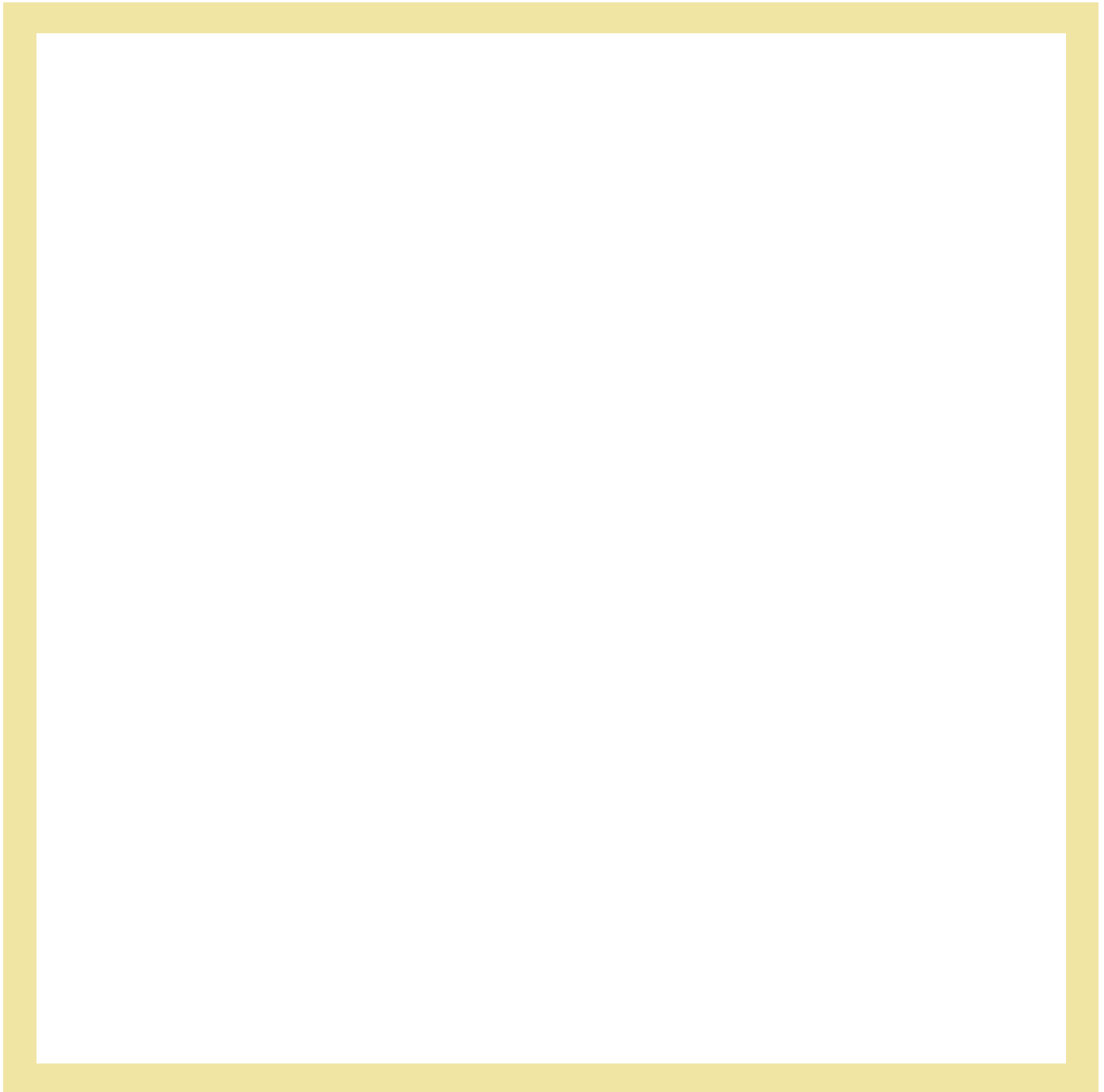
Retrospective: Oblivion or Luminosity

Notes:



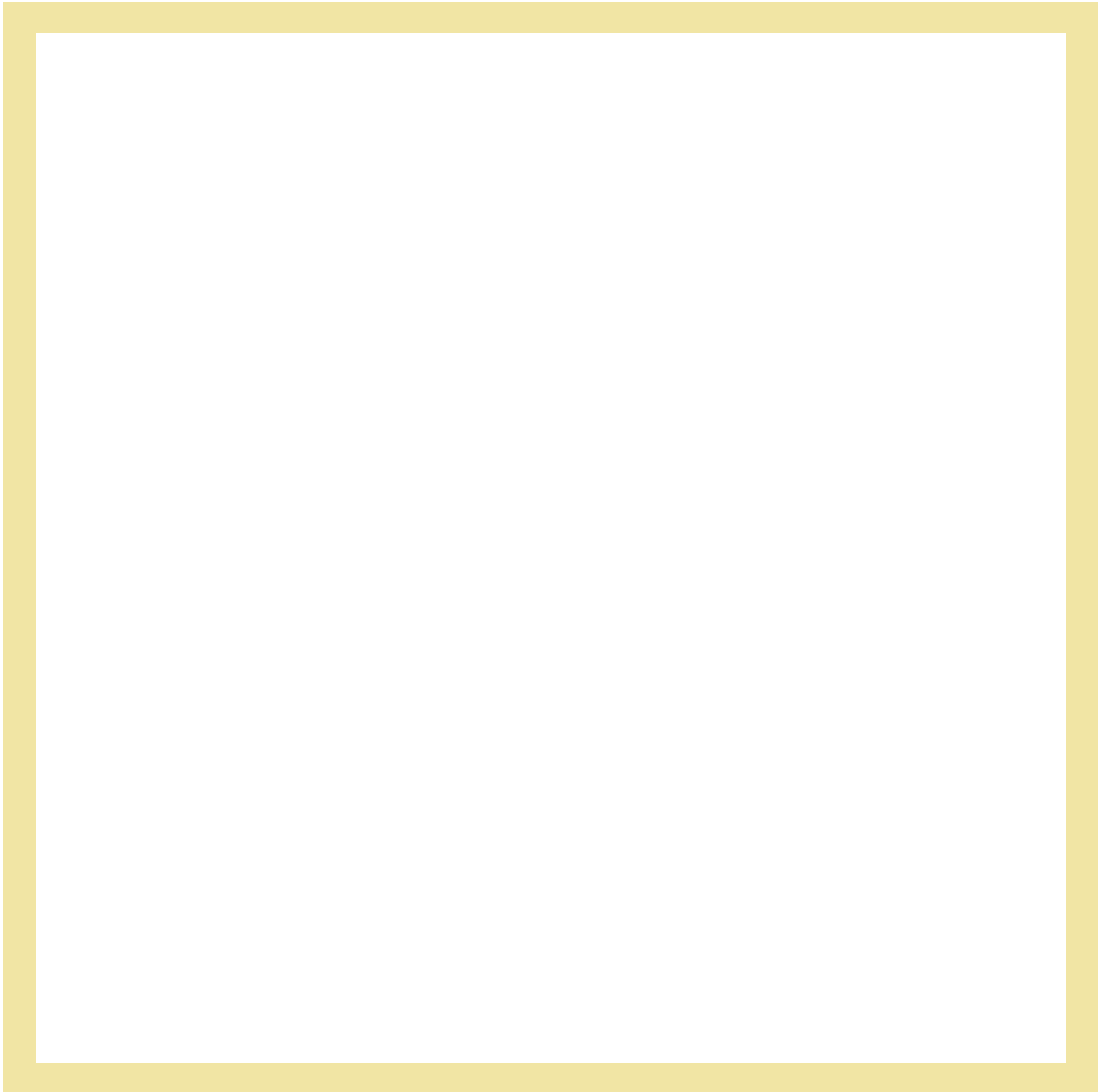
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