

Epistemology

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CATHOLIC STUDIES
ACADEMY



Epistemology

Syllabus & Objectives

Epistemology

Epistemology is the philosophical study of truth, reason, and knowledge. Epistemology involves reasons reflective discovery of its own procedures in coming to understand and affirm the truth. In this course students will be introduced to the classical interpretation of the knowing process along with alternative approaches that distort and subvert the life of the intellect. Students in this course will be equipped to:

- demonstrate familiarity with the major epistemological theories including skepticism, relativism, idealism, realism, and pragmatism.
- define the core ideas of classical epistemology including the law of non-contradiction, truth, reason, science, and sense realism
- demonstrate the reliability of reason and the error of skepticism, relativism, and idealism.
- identify and critique key epistemological ideas that continue to impact contemporary culture.

Epistemology

Lectures and Recommended Readings

The following lectures will be provided in this course:

1. Introduction to Epistemology: Meaning, Problems, and Importance
2. Approaches to Knowledge, Belief, and Justification
3. Reason, Truth, and Being: Dialectical Foundations
4. Sense Perception: Sensation and Sensible Objects
5. Particular Knowledge: Inductive Reasoning and Probability
6. Understanding: Abstraction and Definition
7. Judgment and Demonstration: Combining and Dividing
8. Knowledge Properly Speaking: Reasoning and Scientia
9. Rationalism and Empiricism,
10. Idealism
11. Postmodernism, Scientism, and the New Paradigm
12. Recovering Authentic Knowledge

Texts for the Course:

1. Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation*, Fourth Edition
(McGraw-Hill, 2002)

2. Laurence Bonjour, *Epistemology: Classic Problems and Contemporary Approaches*,
second edition (Rowman and Littlefield, New York: 2010)

Links to Texts by Aristotle:

Metaphysics - <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.html>

Posterior Analytics - <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/posterior.html>

On the Soul (De Anima) - <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.html>

Introduction to Epistemology

Suggested Readings:

Listening: <https://catholicstudiesacademy.com/episode-57-the-problem-of-knowledge/>

Additional Reading: Laurence Bonjour, *Epistemology: Classic Problems and Contemporary Approaches*, second edition (Rowman and Littlefield, New York: 2010), Chapter 1.

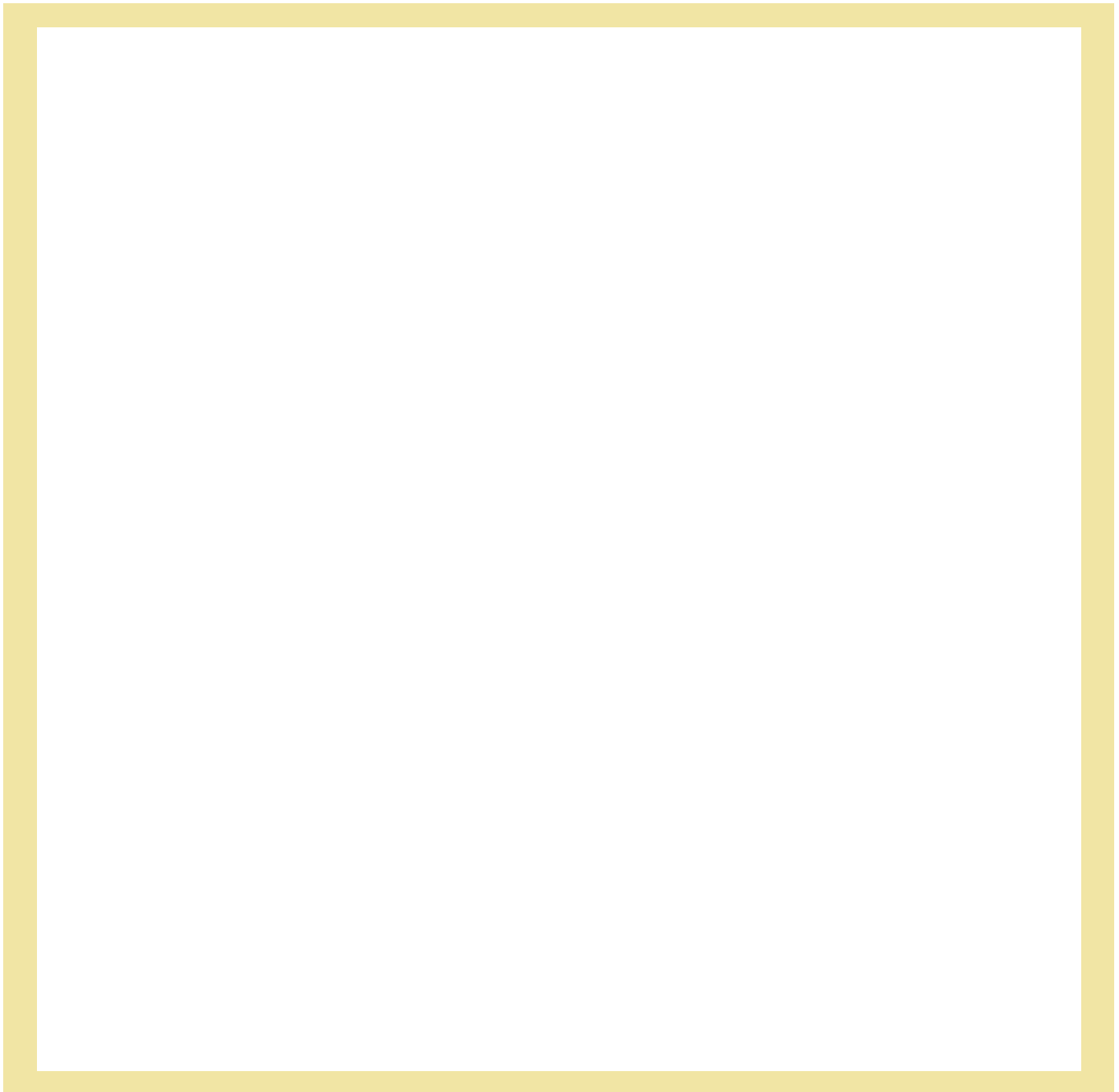
What is epistemology?

How is it related to other philosophical disciplines?

Why is it important?

Introduction to Epistemology

Notes:



Approaches to Knowledge, Belief, and Justification

Relistening: <https://catholicstudiesacademy.com/episode-57-the-problem-of-knowledge/>

Additional Reading: Laurence Bonjour, Chapter 3.

What is the classical meaning of knowledge?

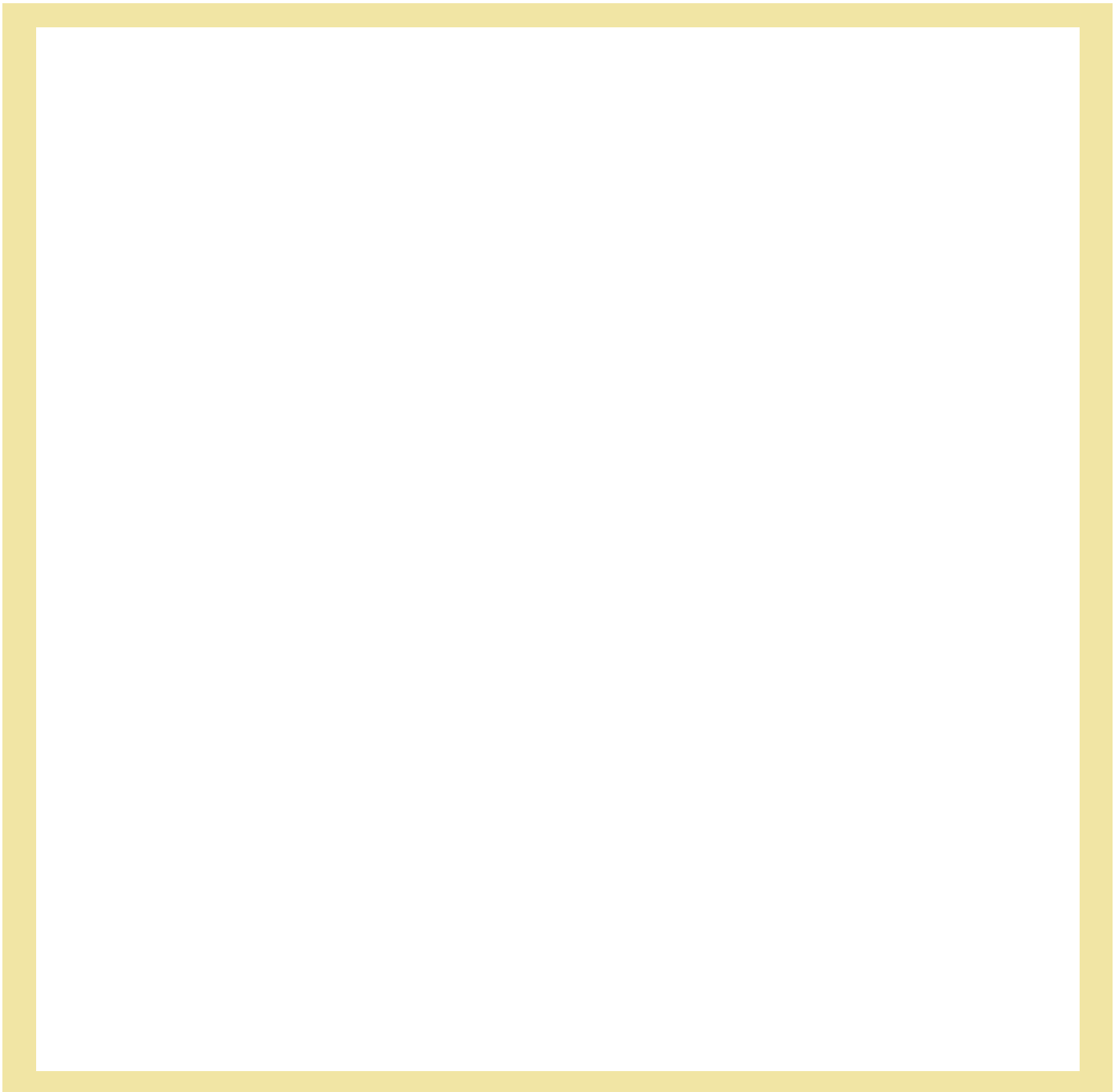
What is the standard modern definition?

What are the major modern approaches to knowledge?

Why are each of these approaches flawed?

Approaches to Knowledge, Belief, and Justification

Notes:



Reason, Truth, and Being: Dialectical Foundations

Listening: <https://catholicstudiesacademy.com/episode-58-classical-realism-clear-path-to-truth/>

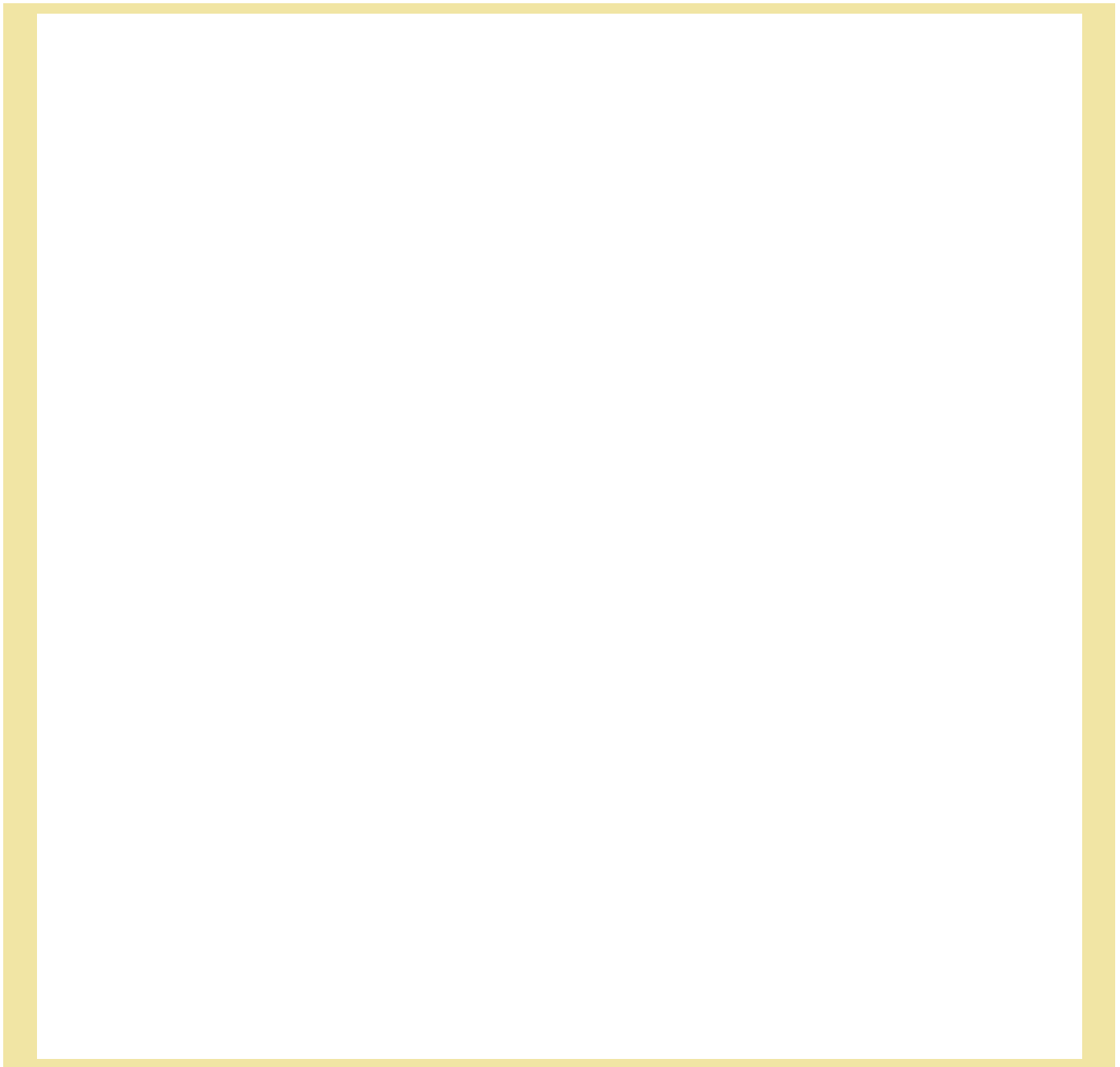
What are the primary theses of classical realism?

How does one refute radical skepticism and relativism?

What is the error that subverts modern approaches to knowledge?

Reason, Truth, and Being: Dialectical Foundations

Notes:



Sense Perception: Sensation and Sensible Objects

Reading: Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation*, fourth edition (McGraw-Hill, Boston: 2002), pp. 157-168. Also: Aristotle, *De Anima* 2.4-5, 2.11-12.

What is sensation?

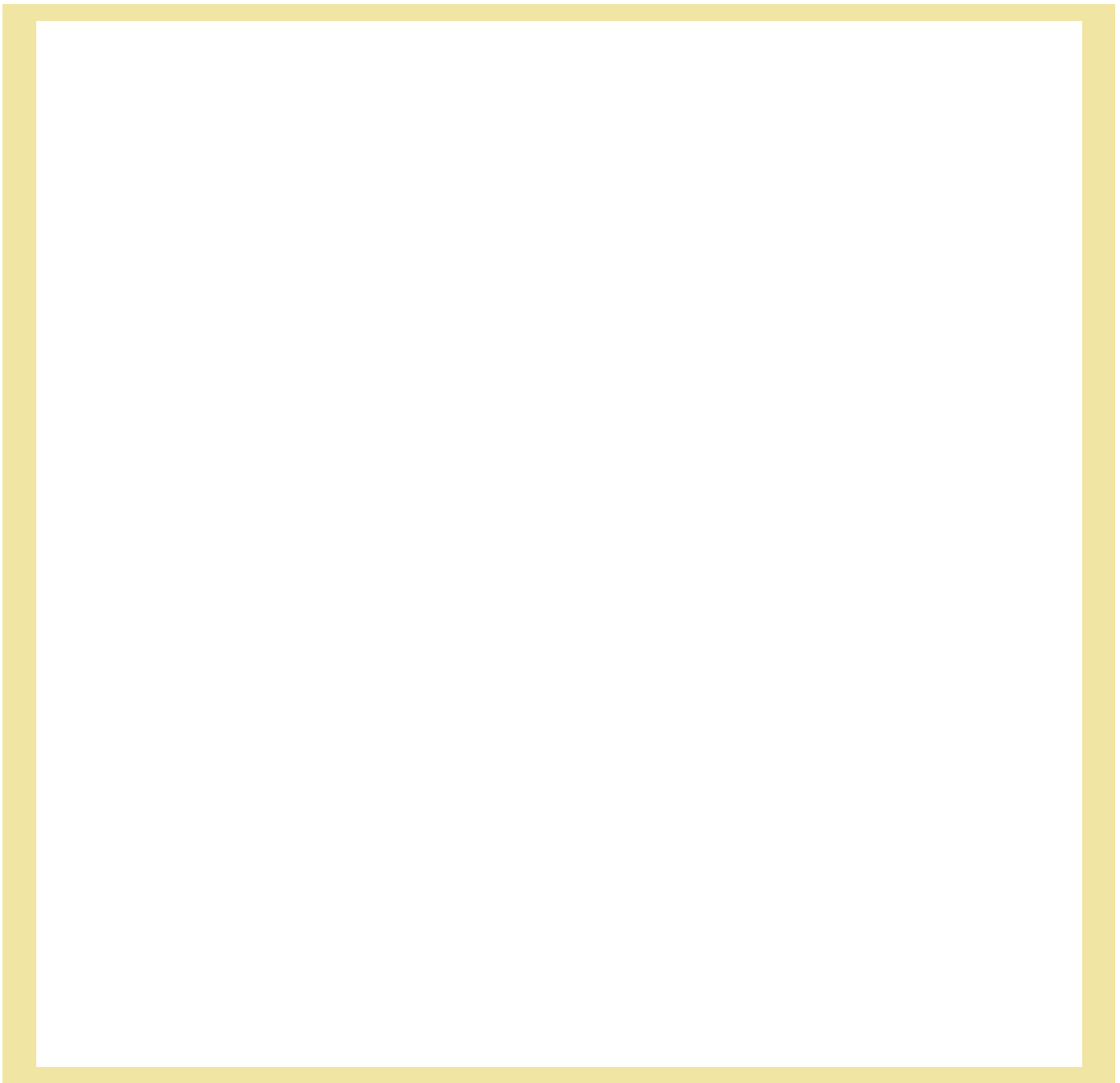
Why does sensation occur?

What are the internal senses? What inclinations and objects are involved?

Whether sense perception is reducible to isolated sensations?

Sense Perception: Sensation and Sensible Objects

Notes:



Particular Knowledge: Inductive Reasoning and Probability

Reading: Norman Melchert, 157-168. Also: Aristotle, Posterior Analytics 1.1-2, Metaphysics 1.1, De Anima 3.2-3.3.

Compare and distinguish inductive and deductive reasoning.

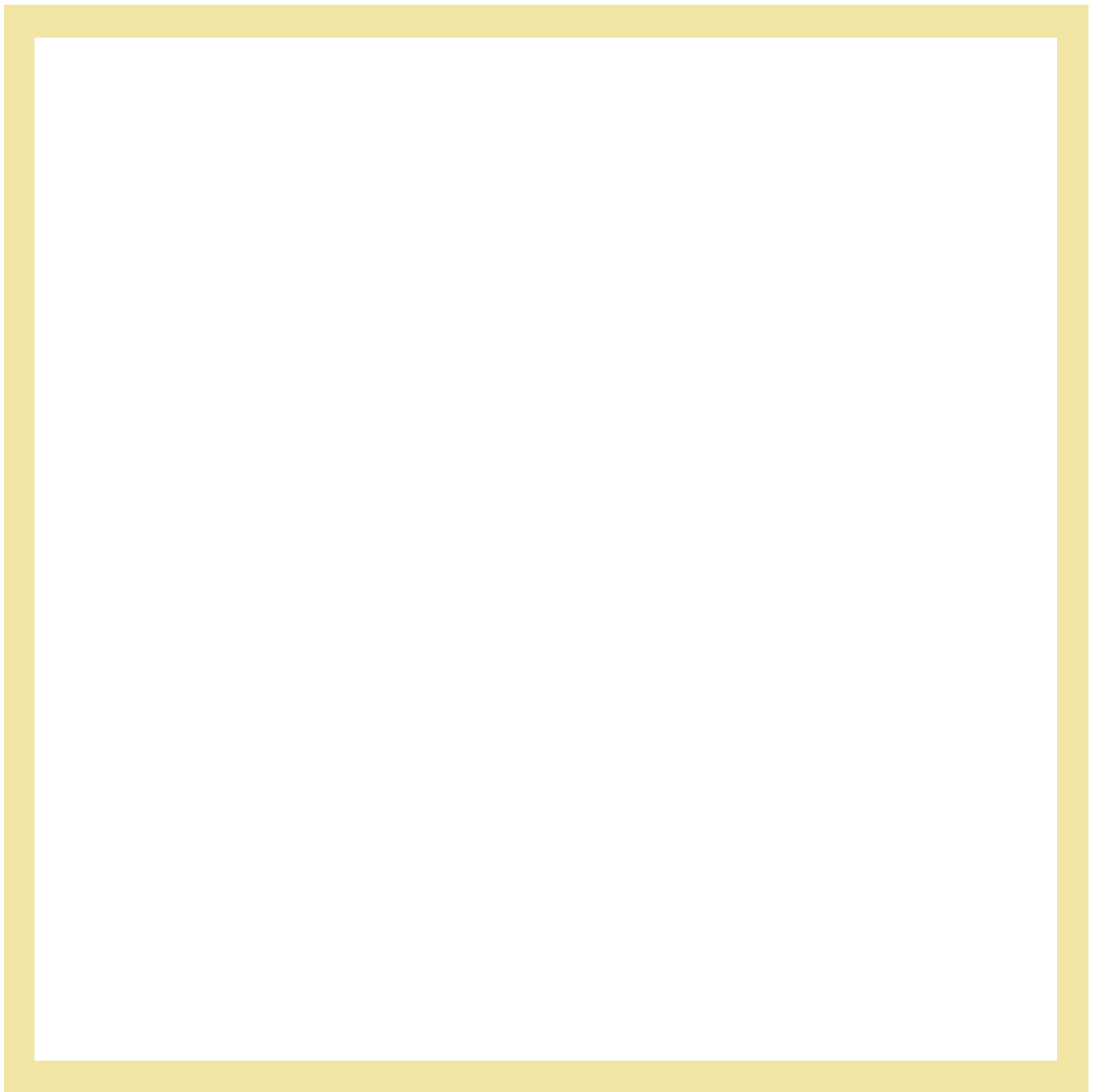
How is inductive reasoning related to sensation?

What is an inductive generalization?

Define and describe the man of experience.

Particular Knowledge: Inductive Reasoning and Probability

Notes:



Understanding: Abstraction and Definition

Reading: Melchert, 157-168. Also: Posterior Analytics 2.19, De Anima 3.4-5.

Define abstraction.

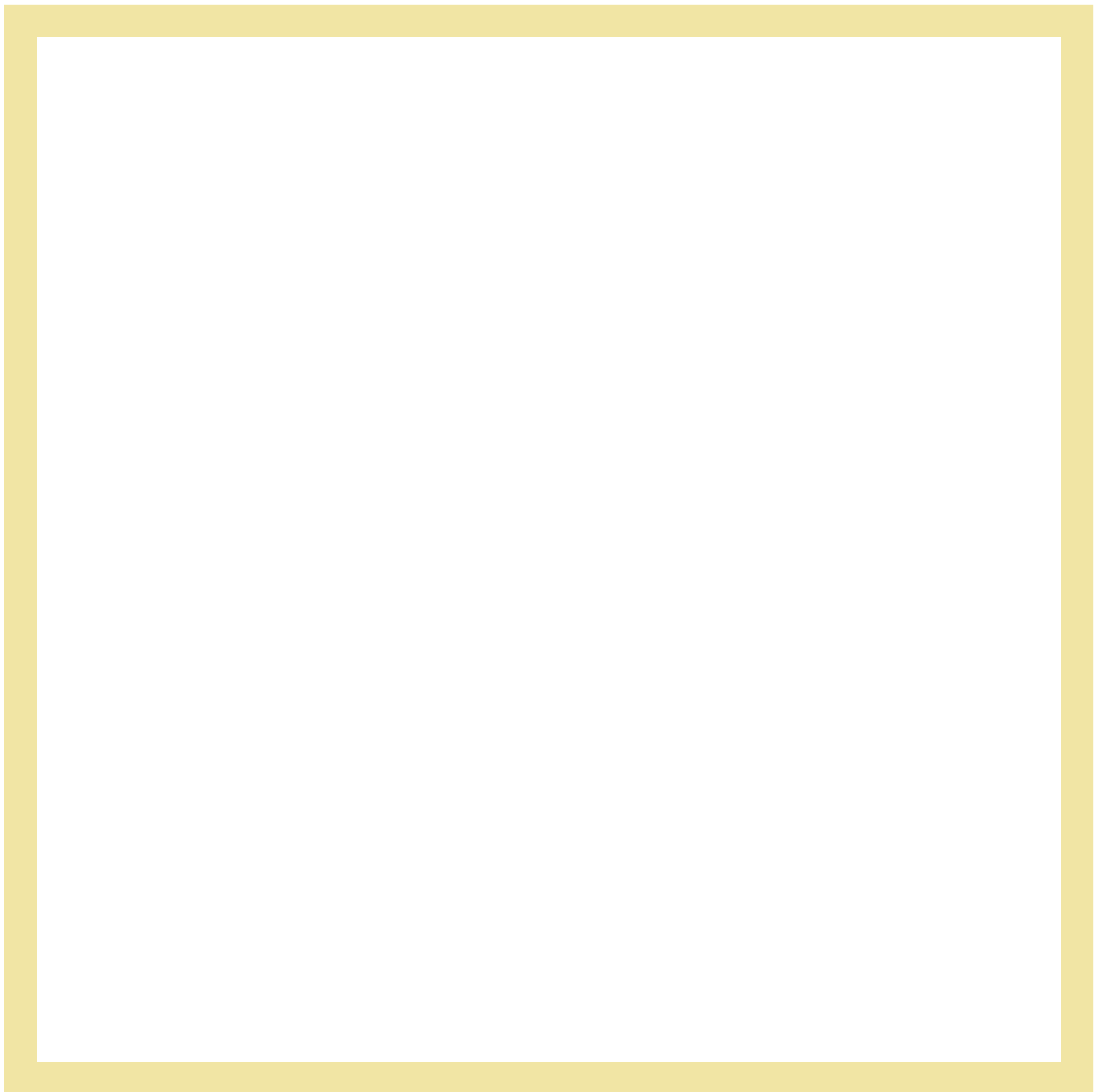
How is abstraction related to sense perception?

In what ways does abstraction transcend sense perception?

What is understanding and why is it important?

Understanding: Abstraction and Definition

Notes:



Judgment and Demonstration: Combining and Dividing

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

What is a judgment?

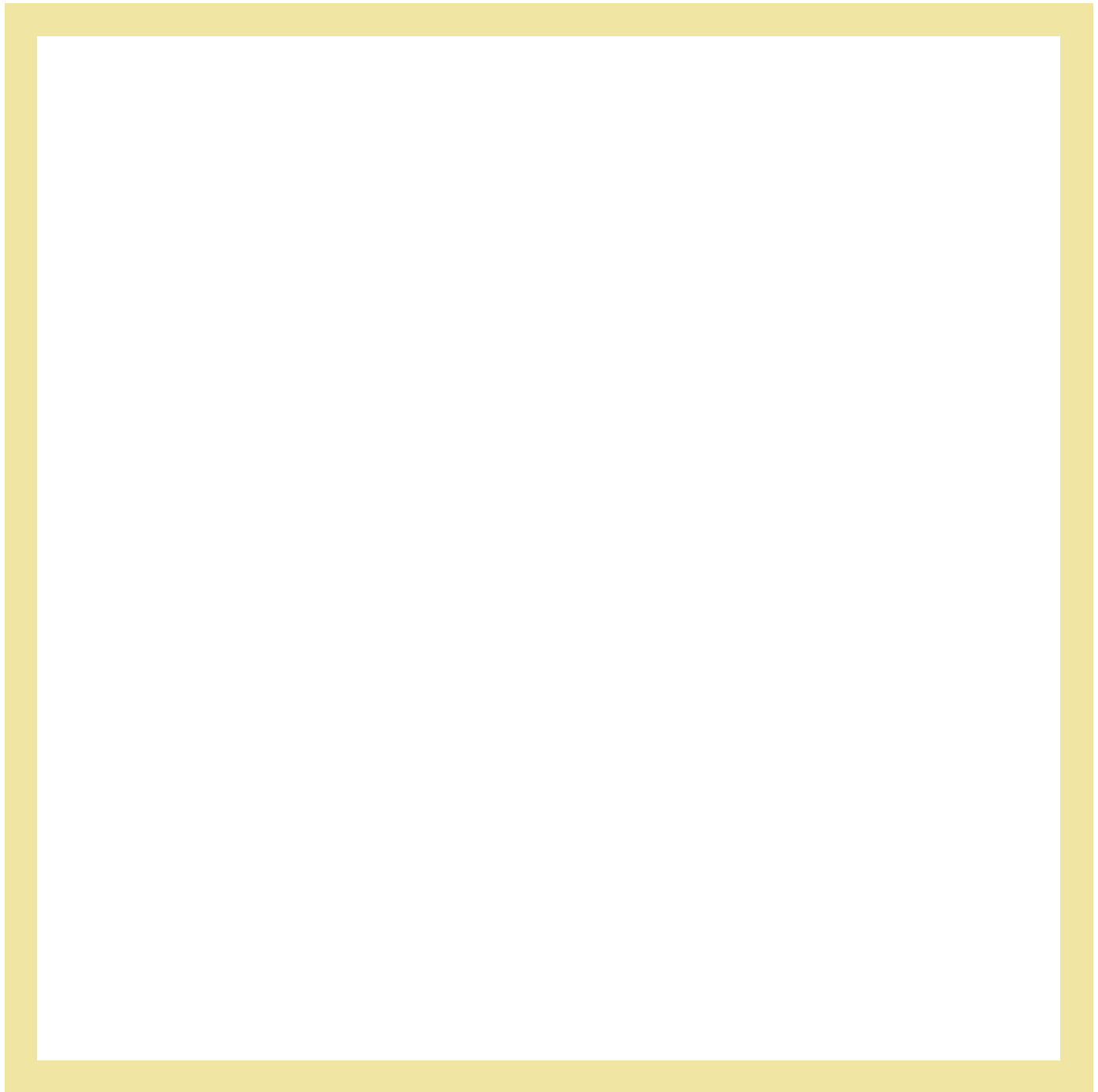
How does judgment transcend understanding?

Whether all judgments can be true?

What is the psychological and moral significance of judgment?

Judgment and Demonstration: Combining and Dividing

Notes:



Knowledge Properly Speaking: Reasoning and Scientia

Reading: Norman Melchert, 157-168. PosteriorAnalytics 1.2-3, 1.13.

What is reasoning?

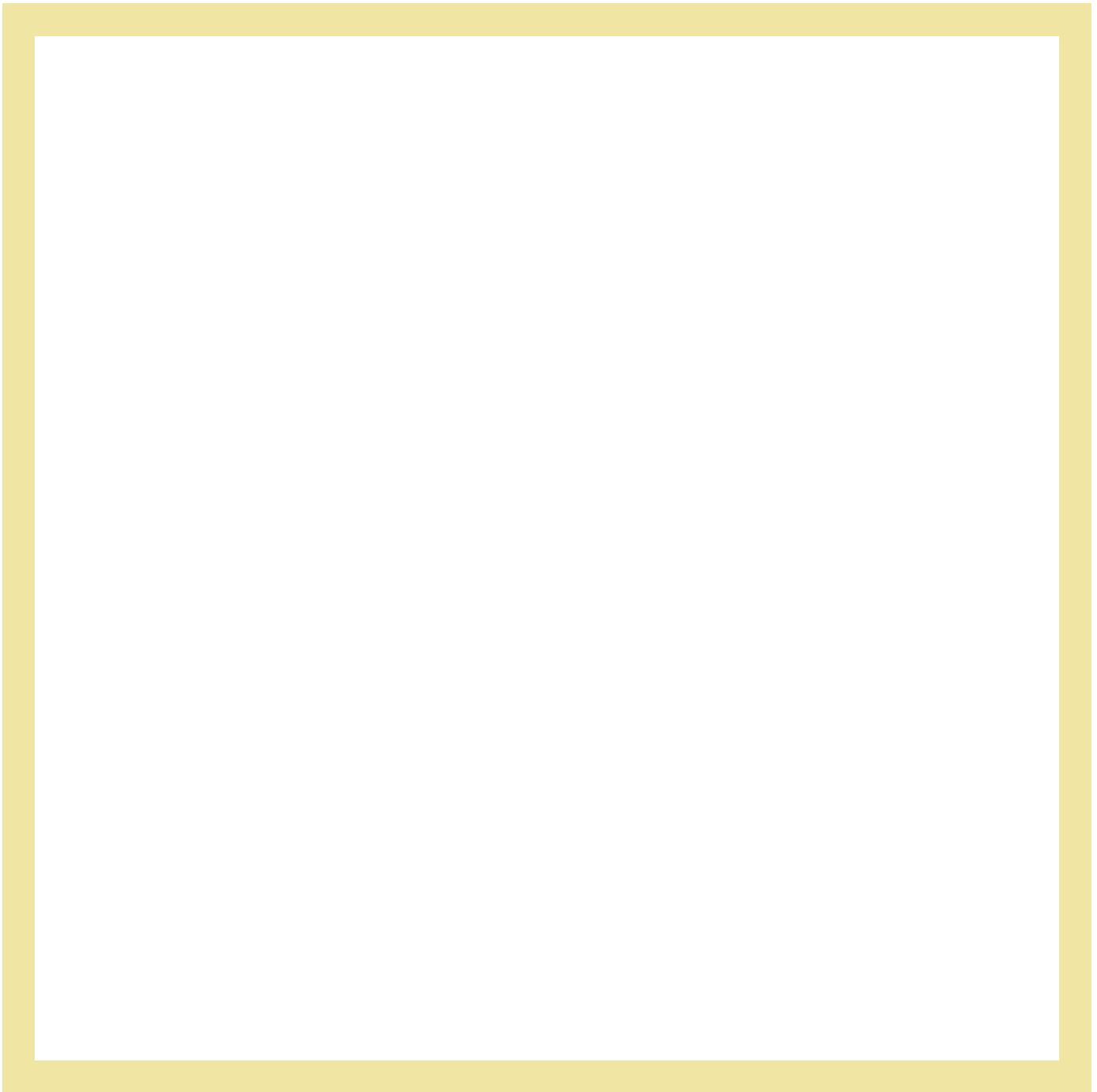
How does reasoning transcend judgment?

What is the connection between reasoning, explanation, and evidence?

What is the habit of science?

Knowledge Properly Speaking: Reasoning and Scientia

Notes:



Rationalism and Empiricism

Reading: Melchert, chapter 13.

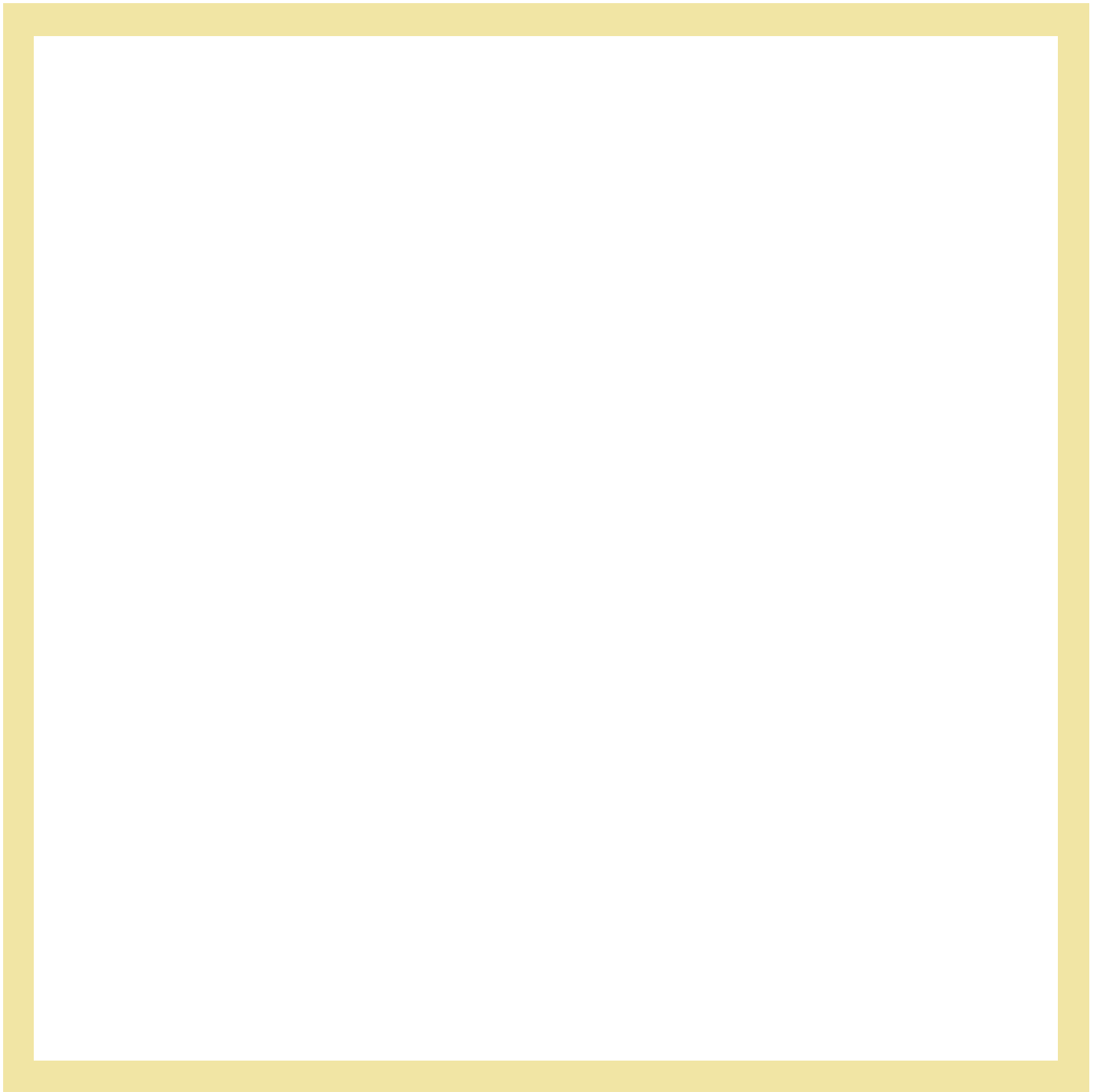
Describe the epistemological project of the enlightenment.

Define and critique rationalism.

Define and critique empiricism.

Rationalism and Empiricism

Notes:



Idealism

Reading: Melchert, pp. 431-445.

What is idealism?

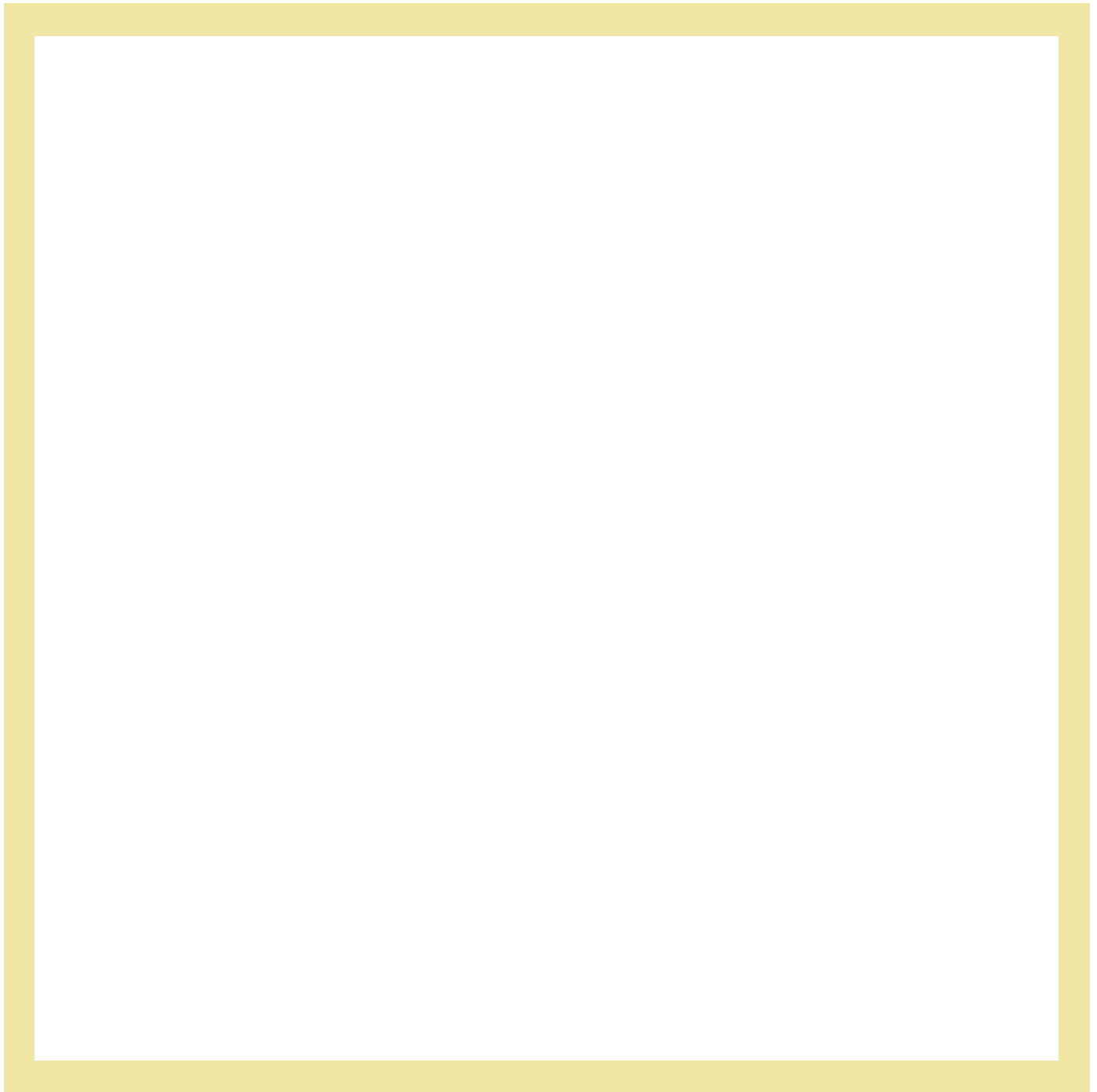
How is it related to rationalism and empiricism?

What are the problems of idealism?

How does it lead to subjectivism?

Idealism

Notes:



Postmodernism, Scientism, and the New Paradigm

Reading: Melchert, chapter 25.

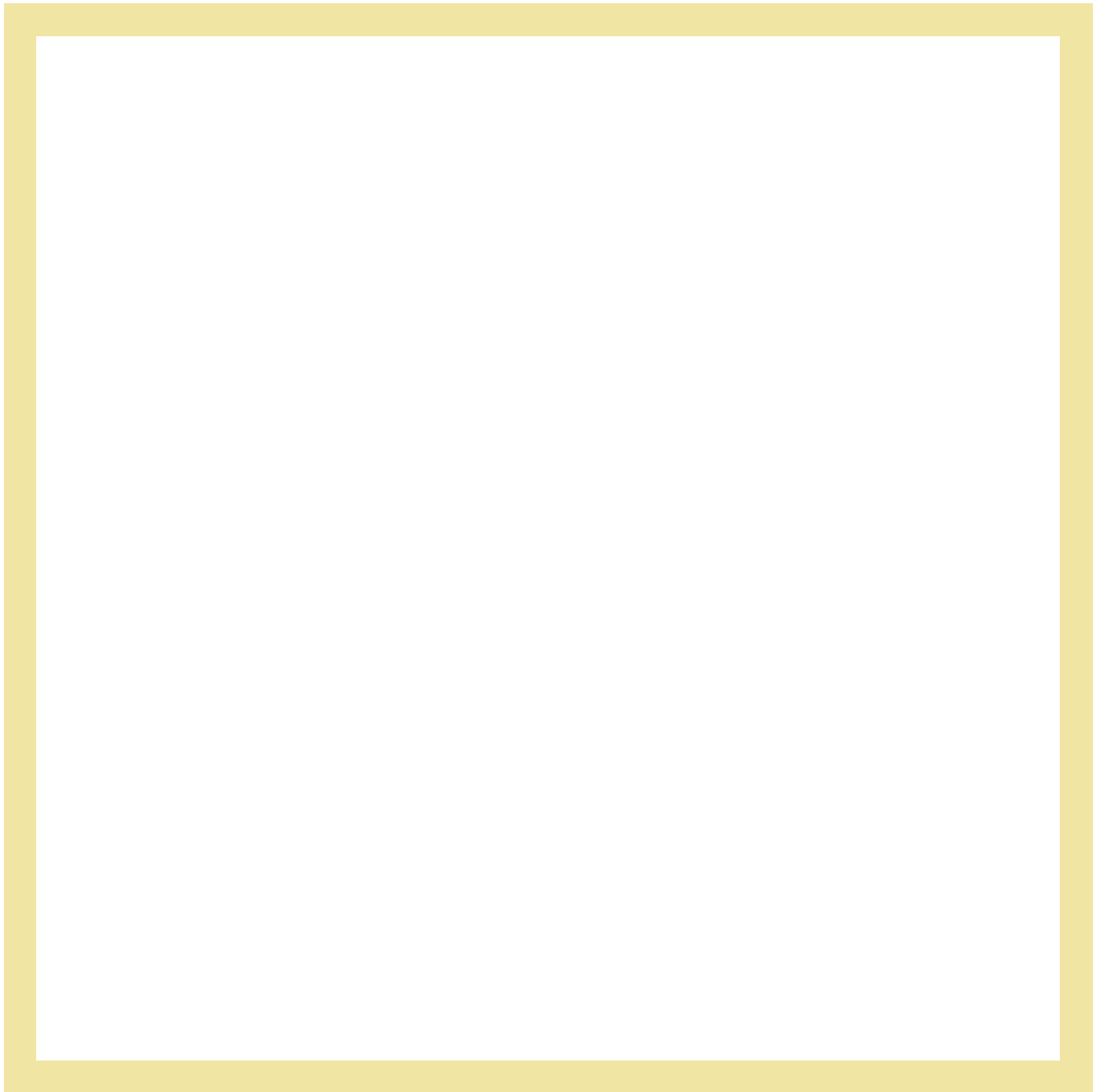
Define and critique postmodernism.

Define and critique scientism.

Describe the New Paradigm

Postmodernism, Scientism, and the New Paradigm

Notes:



Recovering Authentic Knowledge

Listening: <https://catholicstudiesacademy.com/episode-58-classical-realism-clear-path-to-truth/>

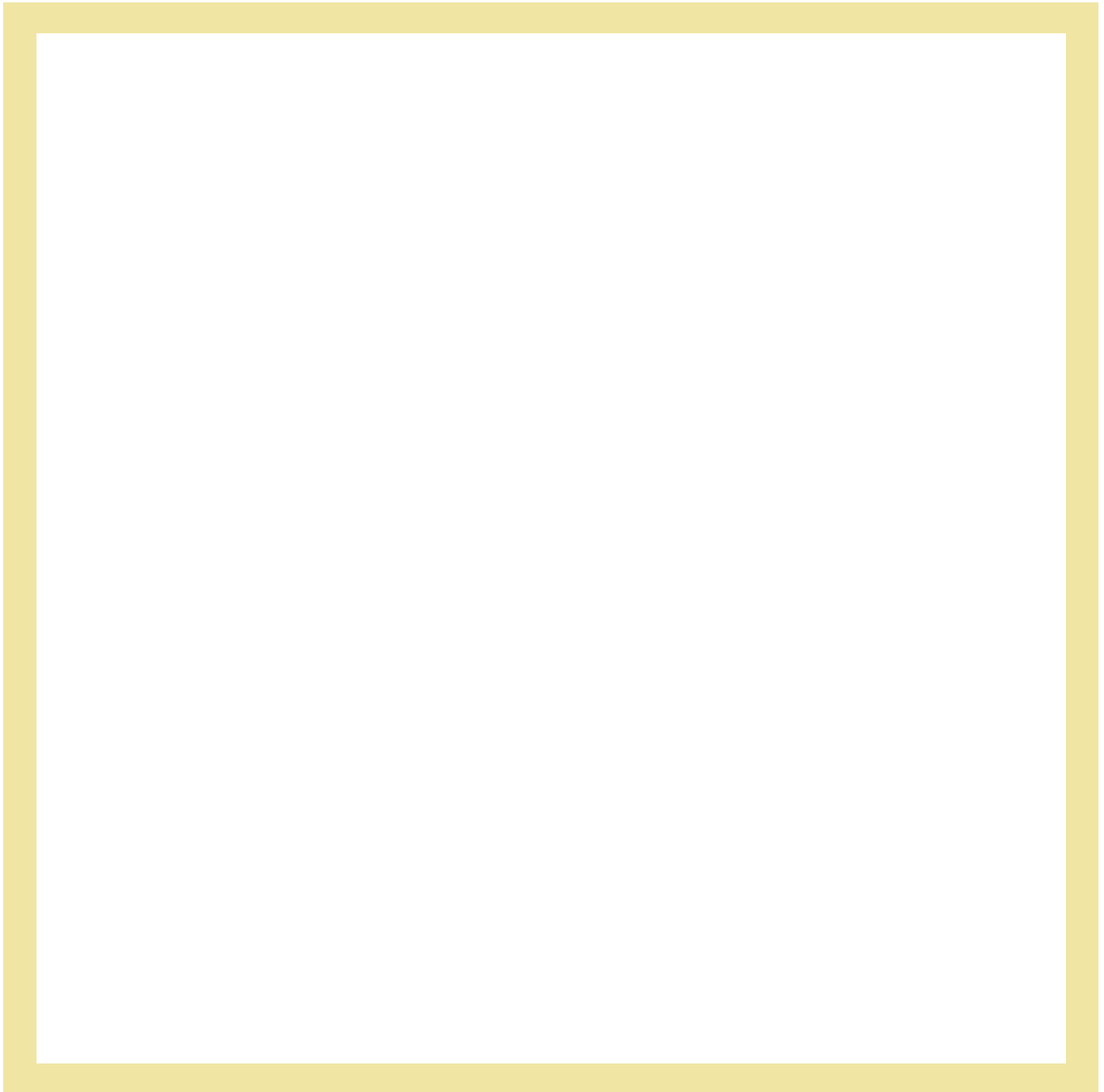
What are the root problems of the modern epistemological project?

What are the best means for recovering authentic knowledge?

Why is it important to do so?

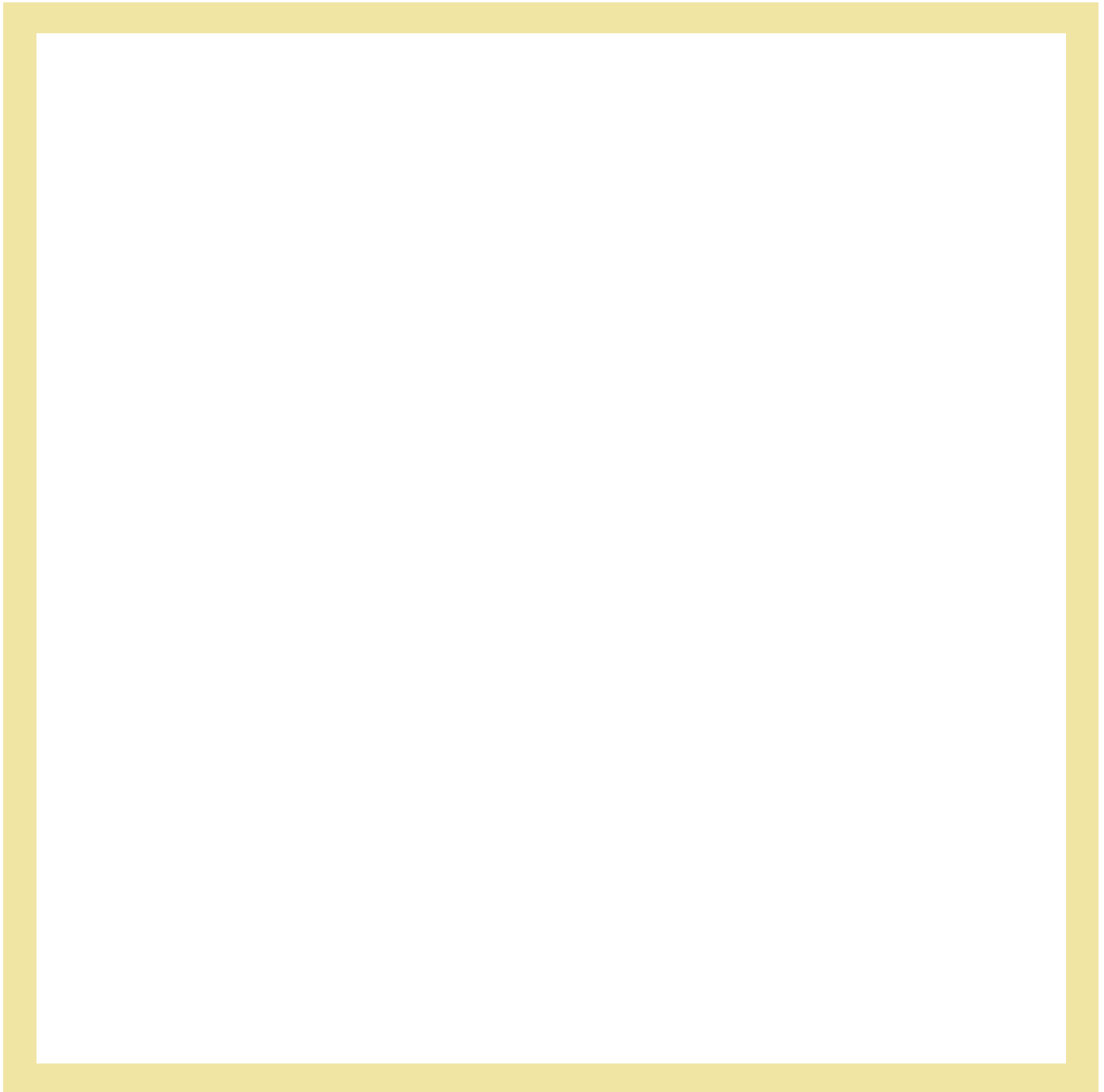
Recovering Authentic Knowledge

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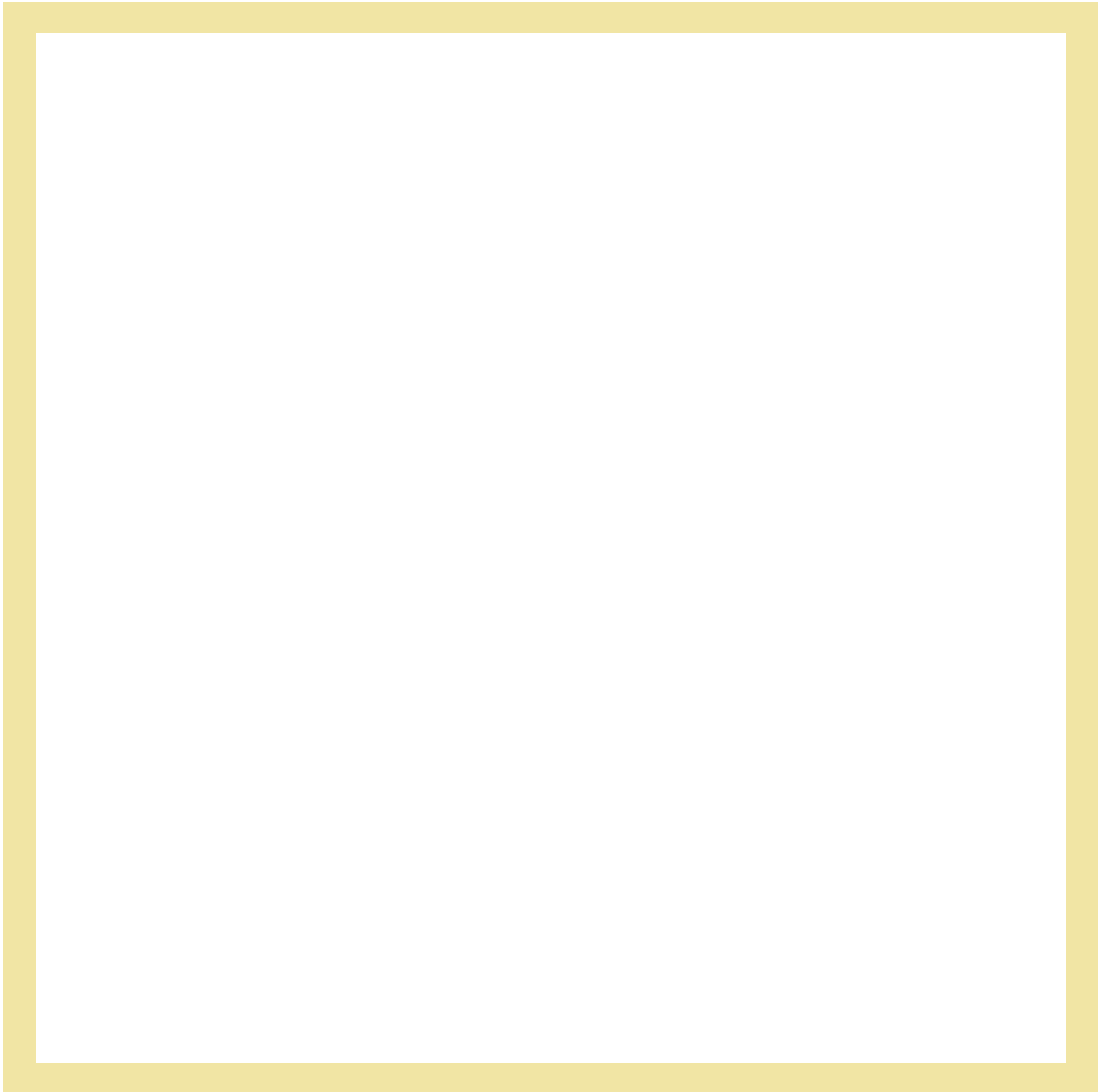
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