

Philosophy of God

Dr. Benjamin Smith

CATHOLIC STUDIES
ACADEMY



Philosophy of God

Syllabus & Objectives

Philosophy of God

Philosophy of God (or natural theology) is the highest achievement of philosophy; it presupposes metaphysics and explores everything that may be known by reason about the first cause of being. This field of philosophy provides essential concepts and insights to Catholic theology about the divine attributes. In this course, students will be introduced to the key concepts of classical theism as well as subversive alternatives. Students will be equipped to:

- demonstrate familiarity with the major theories about God including polytheism, pantheistic monism, classical theism, modernism, and open theism.
- define the core ideas of classical theism including first causality, immutability, divine simplicity, eternity, and divine providence.
- demonstrate the existence of God, the primacy of God, and predestination.
- identify and critique key ideas in the philosophy of God that continue to impact contemporary theology.

Philosophy of God

Lectures and Recommended Readings

The following lectures will be provided in this course:

1. Introduction: Philosophy in Service to Sacred Doctrine (ST I.1)
2. The existence of God, part one (ST I.2)
3. Divine Simplicity (ST I.3) and Immutability (ST I.9)
4. The (Positive) Names of God (ST I.13)
5. Perfection and Goodness (ST I.4, 6)
6. Omnipresence (ST I.8) and Eternity (ST I.10)
7. God's Knowledge (SCG I.44, paragraphs 6-10) and God's Will and Love (ST I.19-20)
8. Providence (ST I.22)
9. Predestination and the Book of Life (ST I.23-24)
10. Omnicausality, human freedom, and contingency (Handout TBD)
11. Modern Alternatives (<https://seop.illc.uva.nl/entries/process-theism/>)
12. The Indispensable Truths of Classical Theism

Texts for the Course:

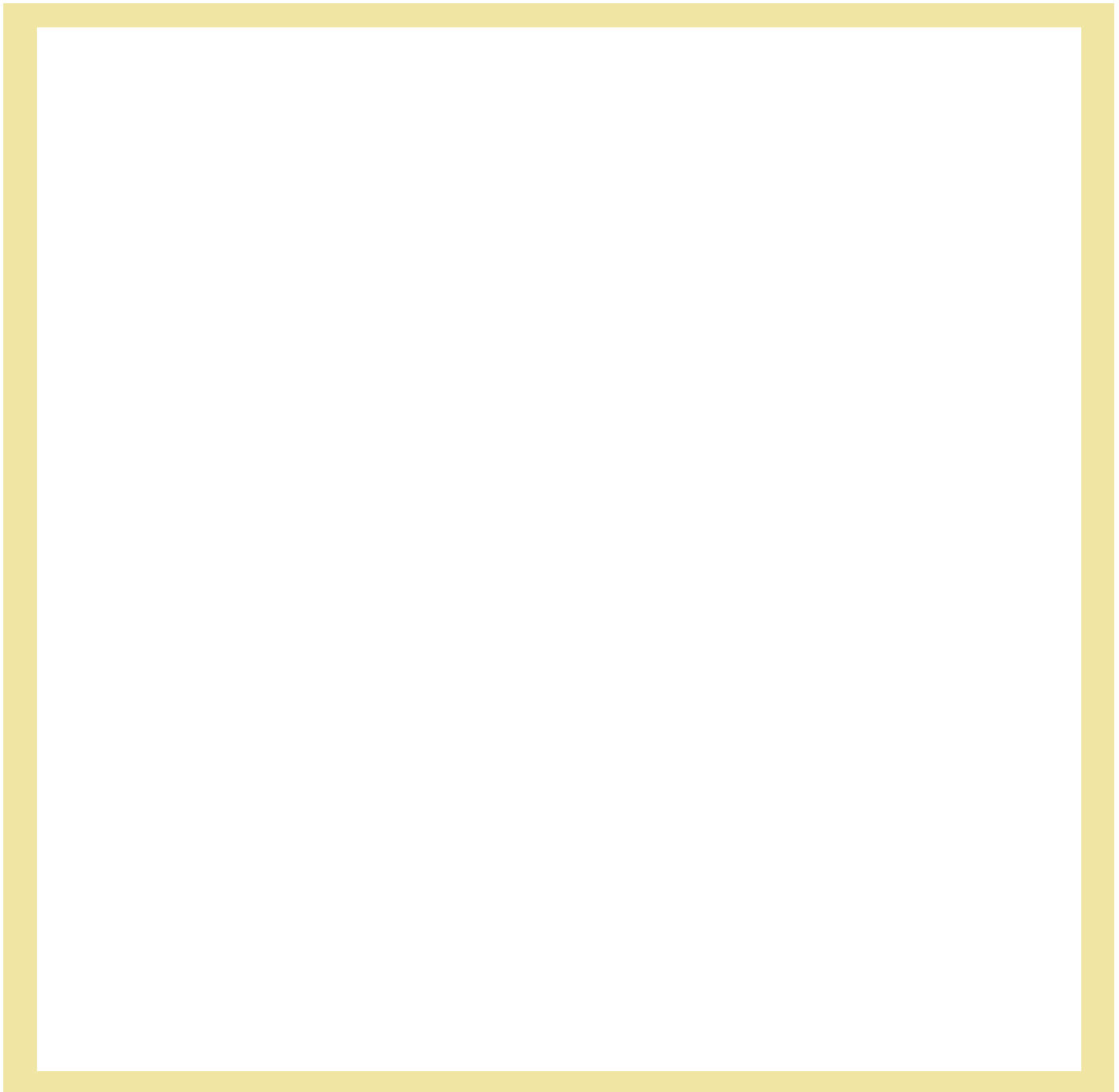
1. Summa Theologiae (ST) may be found here: <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/>
2. Summa Contra Gentiles: <https://isidore.co/aquinas/english/ContraGentiles1.htm>

Introduction: Philosophy in Service to Sacred Doctrine (ST I.1)

1. What is philosophy of God or natural theology?
2. How is natural theology related to sacred theology?
3. What are the main philosophical theories regarding God?

Introduction: Philosophy in Service to Sacred Doctrine (ST I.1)

Notes:



The Existence of God (I.2)

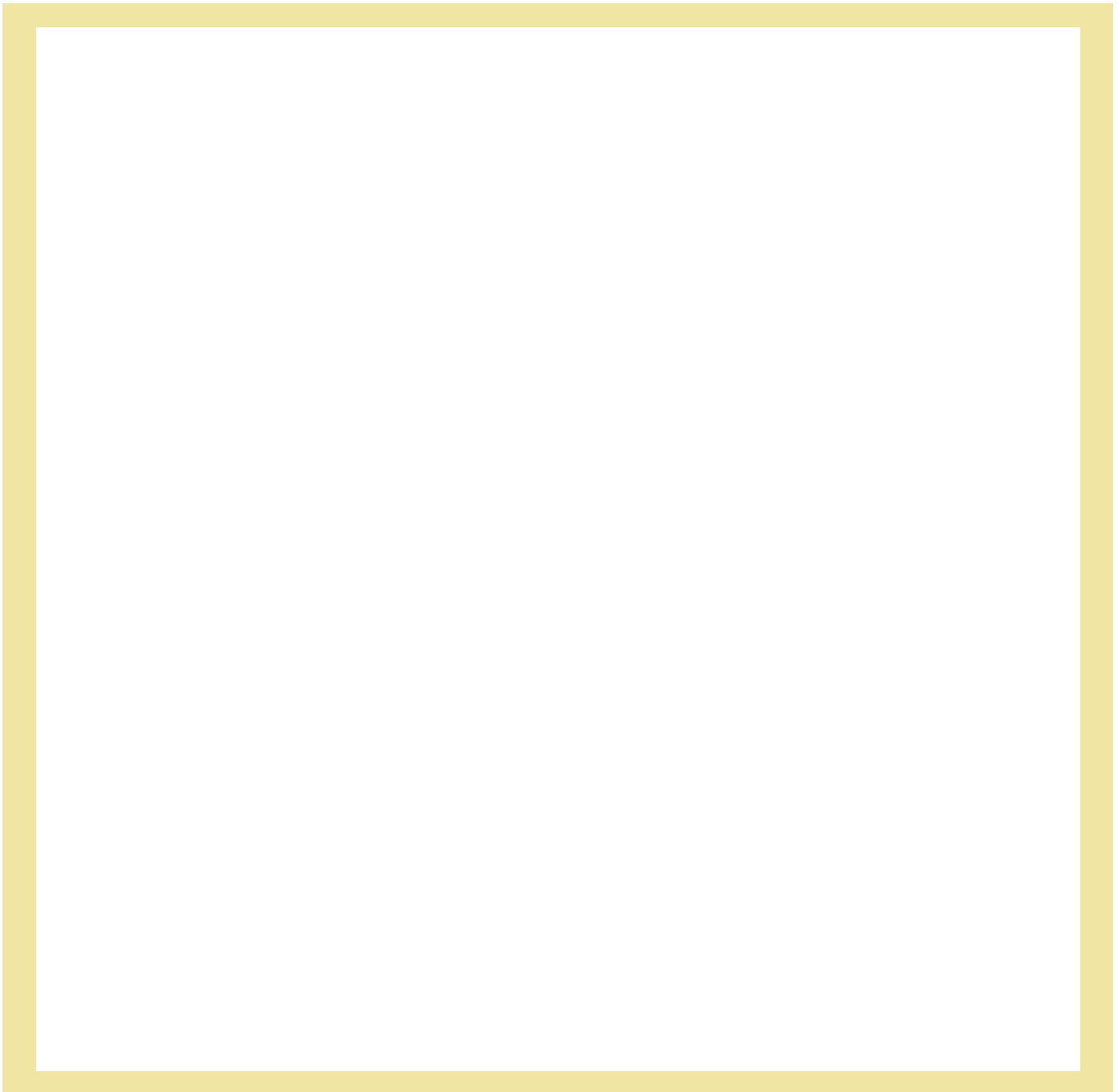
1. Whether the existence of God is self-evident?

2. What kind of reasoning is employed in the arguments for God's existence?

3. What is the principle of causality?

The Existence of God (I.2)

Notes:



Divine Simplicity (ST I.3) and Immutability (ST I.9)

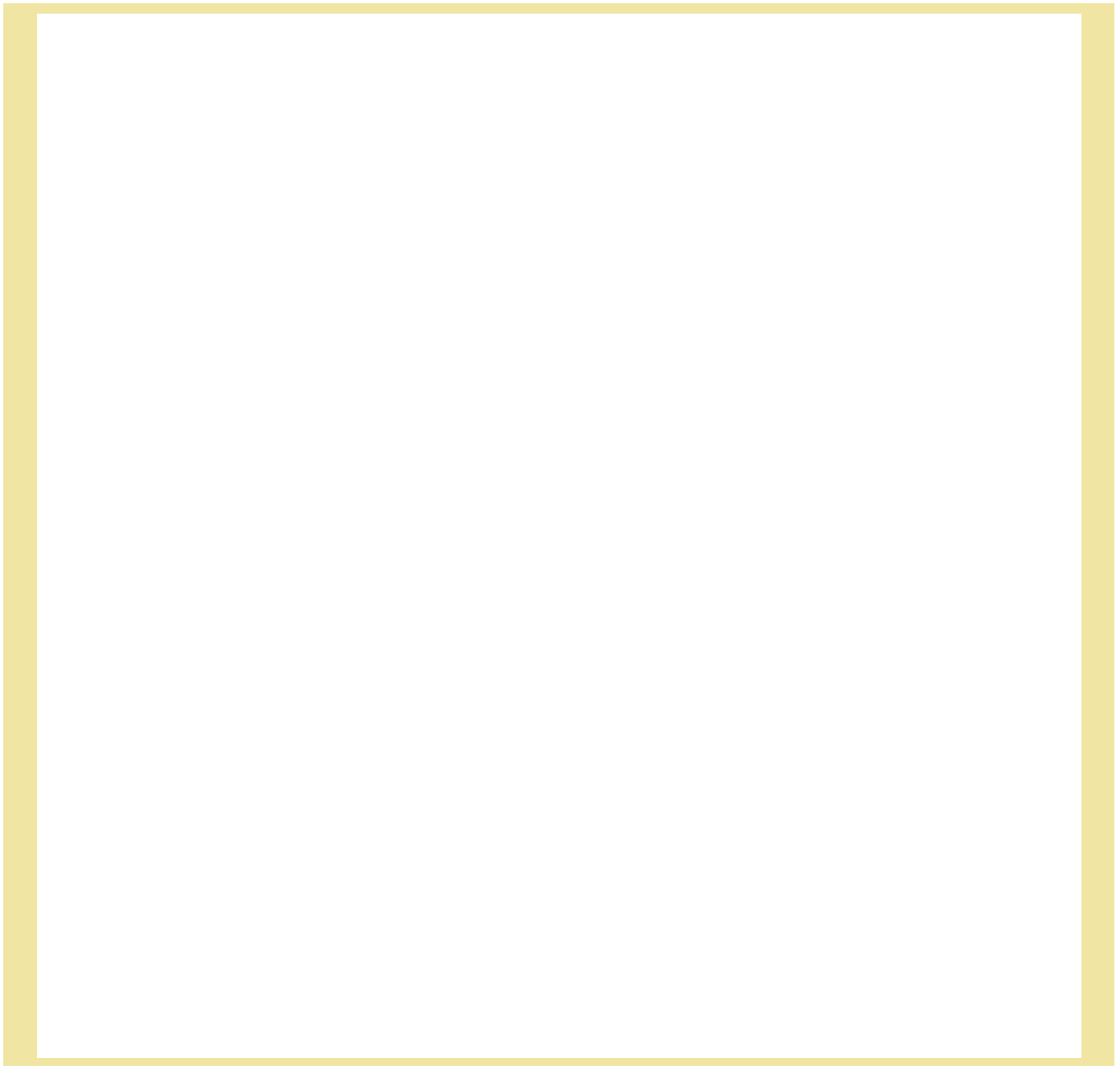
1. What is the meaning of “simplicity?”

2. Why is divine simplicity important?

3. Whether God is static or dynamic?

Divine Simplicity (ST I.3) and Immutability (ST I.9)

Notes:

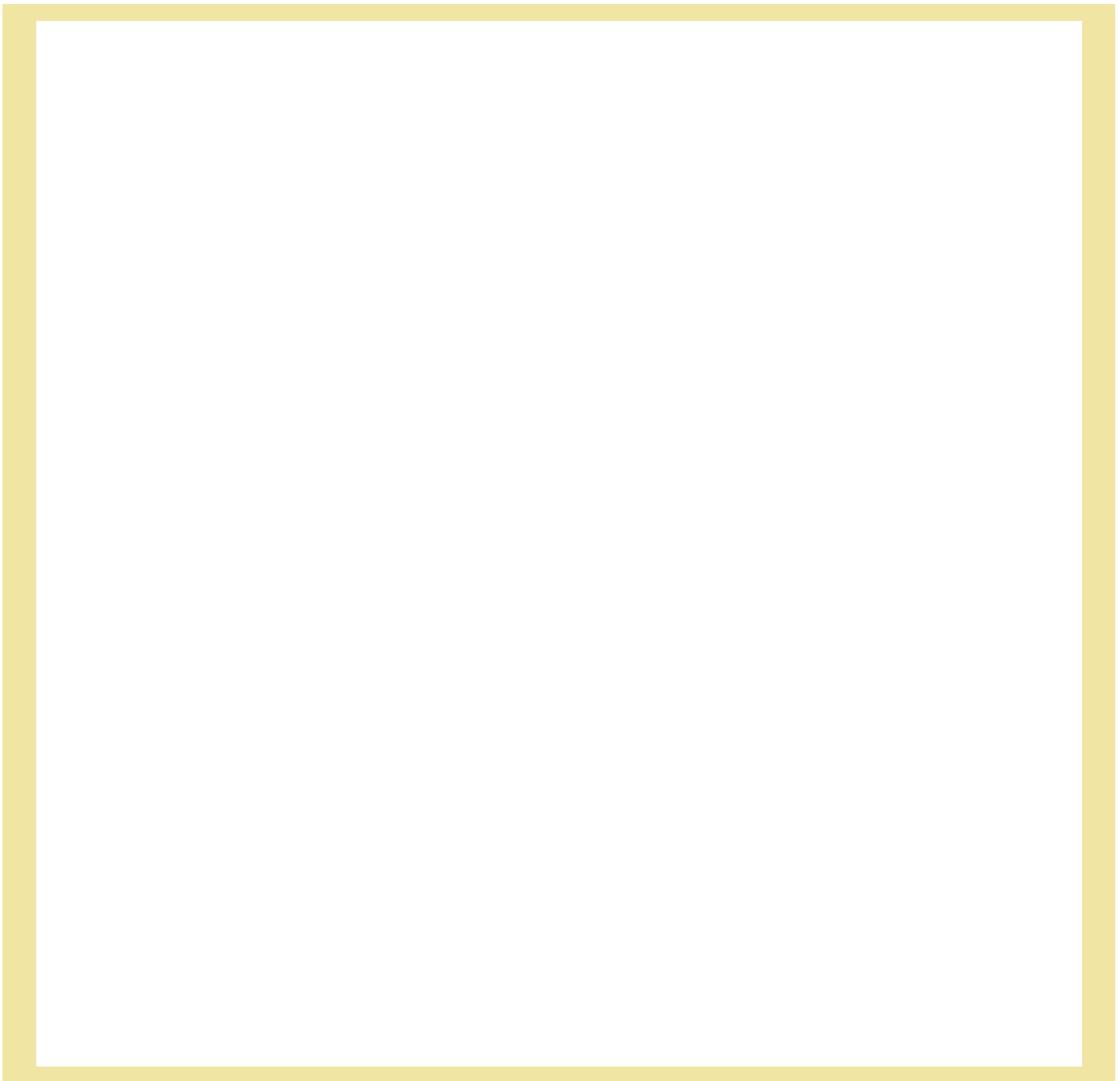


The (Positive) Names of God (ST I.13)

1. Distinguish univocal, equivocal, and analogous names.
2. Whether the proper perfections of God are said univocally?
3. What is the basis of the doctrine of analogy?

The (Positive) Names of God (ST 1.13)

Notes:



Perfection and Goodness (ST I.4, 6)

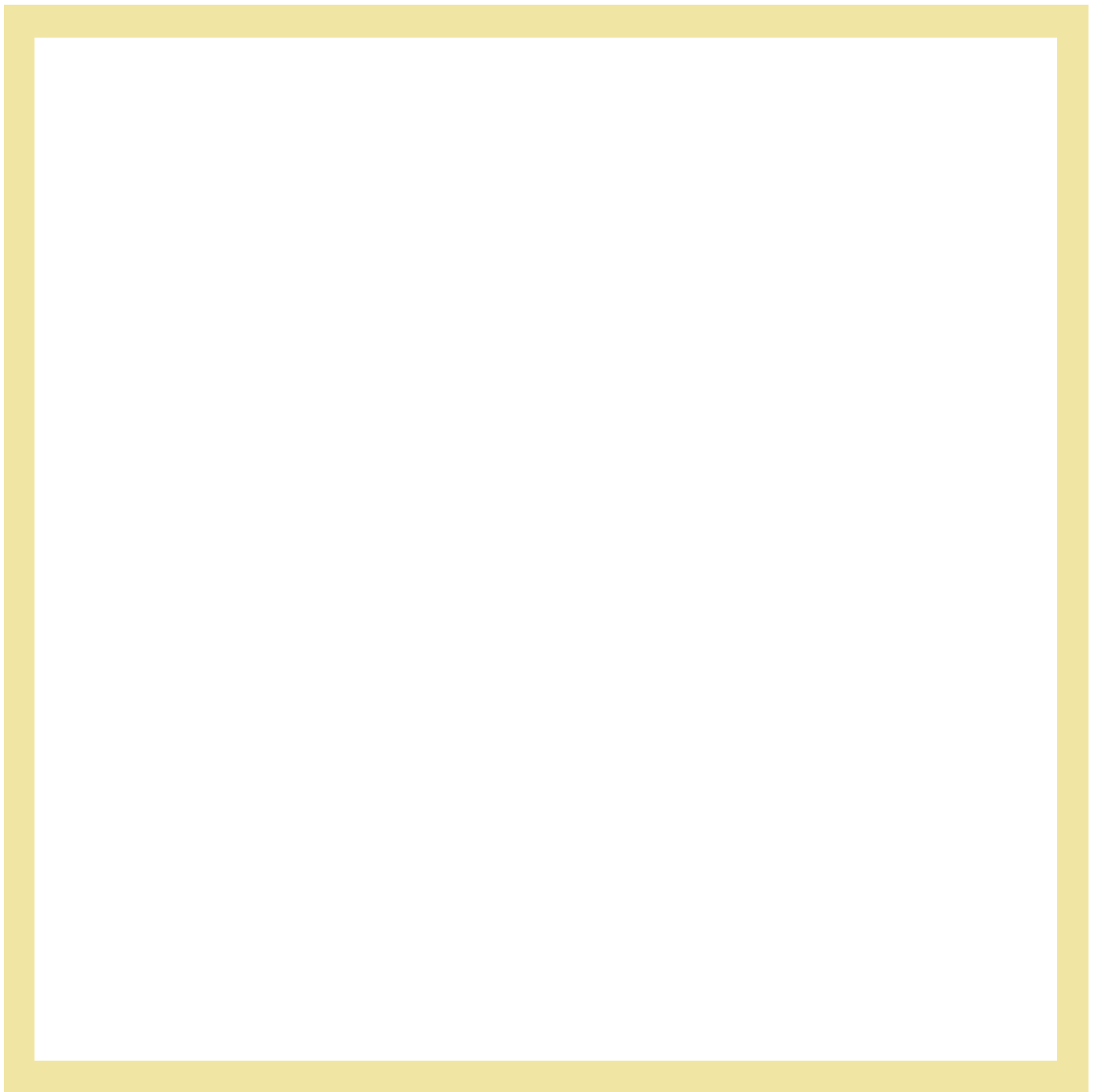
1. What is the meaning of goodness?

2. Whether God alone is essentially good?

3. Does the suffering of creatures detract from the goodness of God?

Perfection and Goodness (ST I.4, 6)

Notes:



Omnipresence (ST I.8) and Eternity (ST I.10)

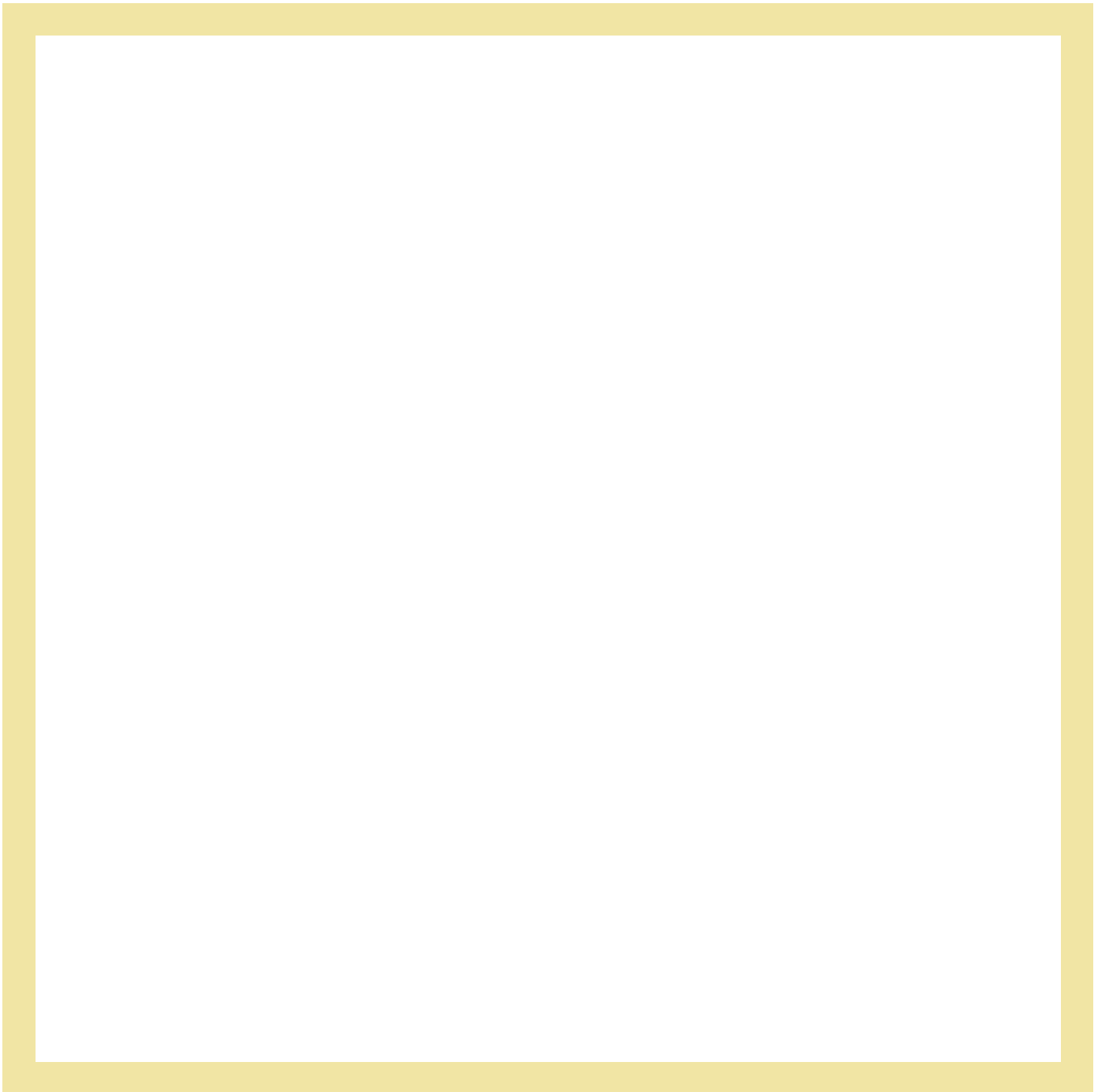
1. Whether God is universally present to His creatures?

2. Whether God is “outside” of time?

3. How should we think about time?

Omnipresence (ST I.8) and Eternity (ST I.10)

Notes:



God's Knowledge (SCG I.44.paragraphs 6-10) and God's Will and Love (ST I.19-20)

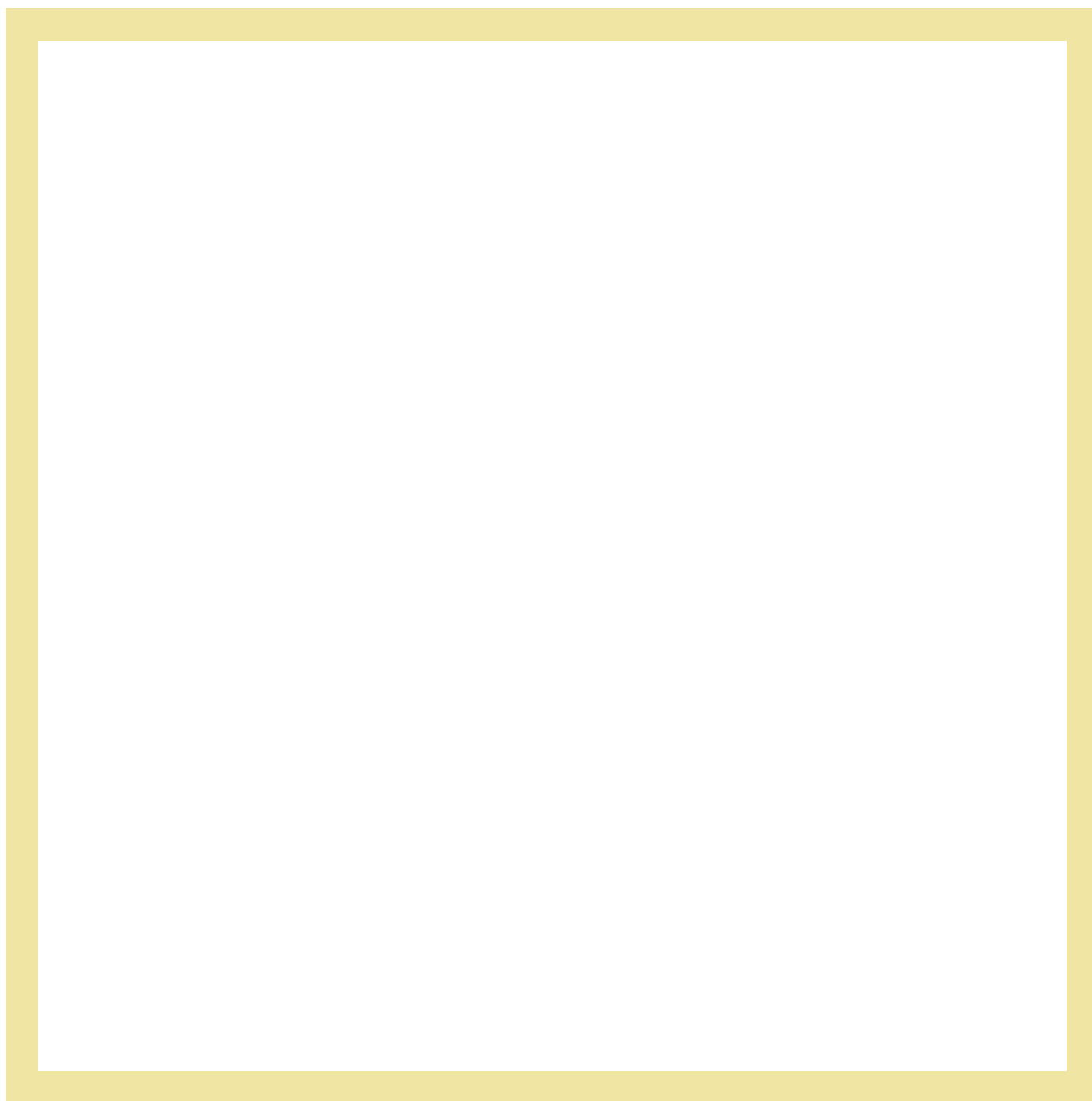
1. Whether God knows future contingents?

2. Whether God's foreknowledge excludes contingency?

3. What is the first and primary object of God's love?

God's Knowledge (SCG I.44.paragraphs 6-10) and God's Will and Love (ST I.19-20)

Notes:



Providence (ST I.22)

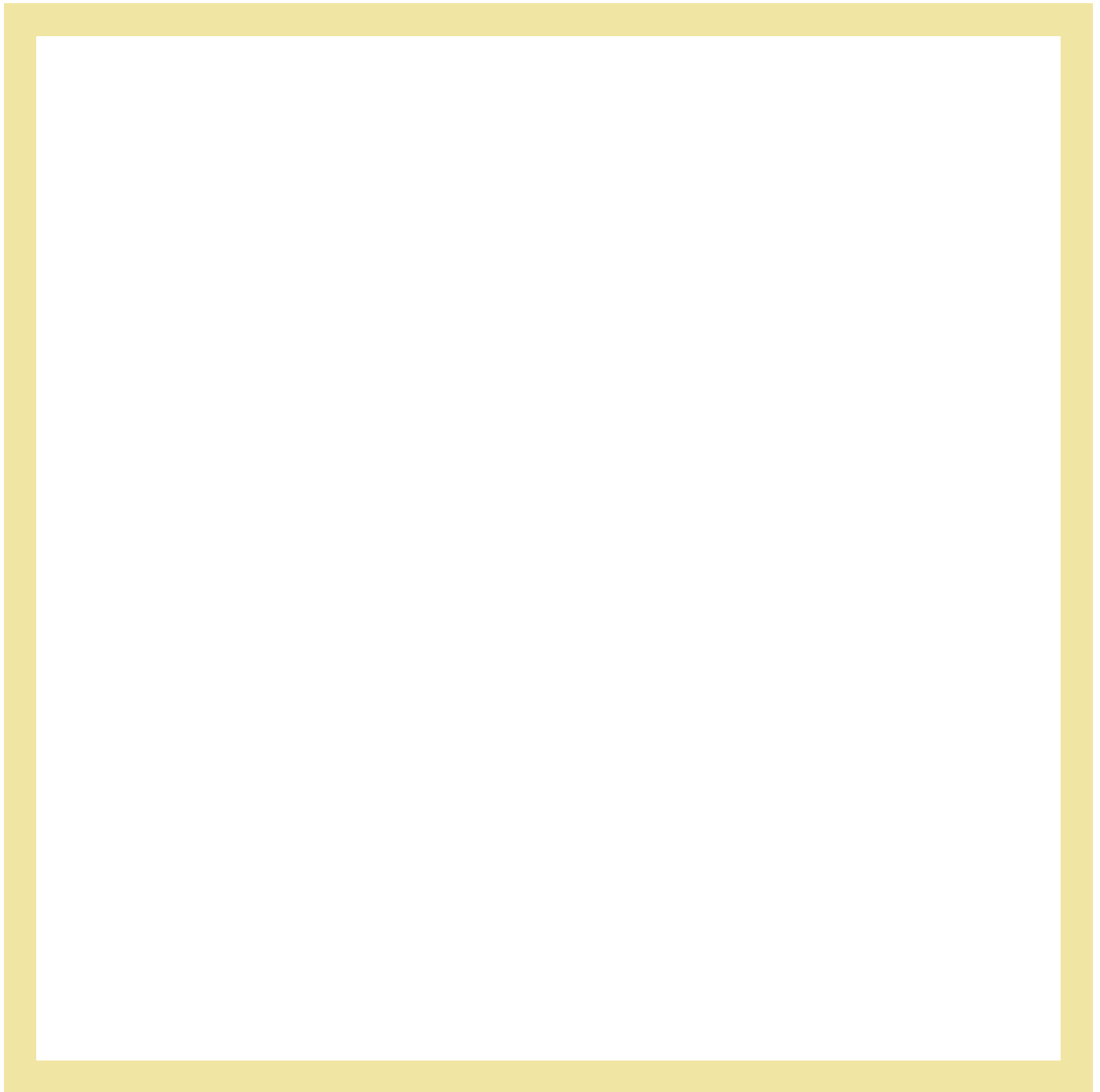
1. Whether providence includes human action?

2. Whether providence excludes contingency?

3. Whether providence includes evil?

Providence (ST I.22)

Notes:



Predestination and the Book of Life (ST 1.23-24)

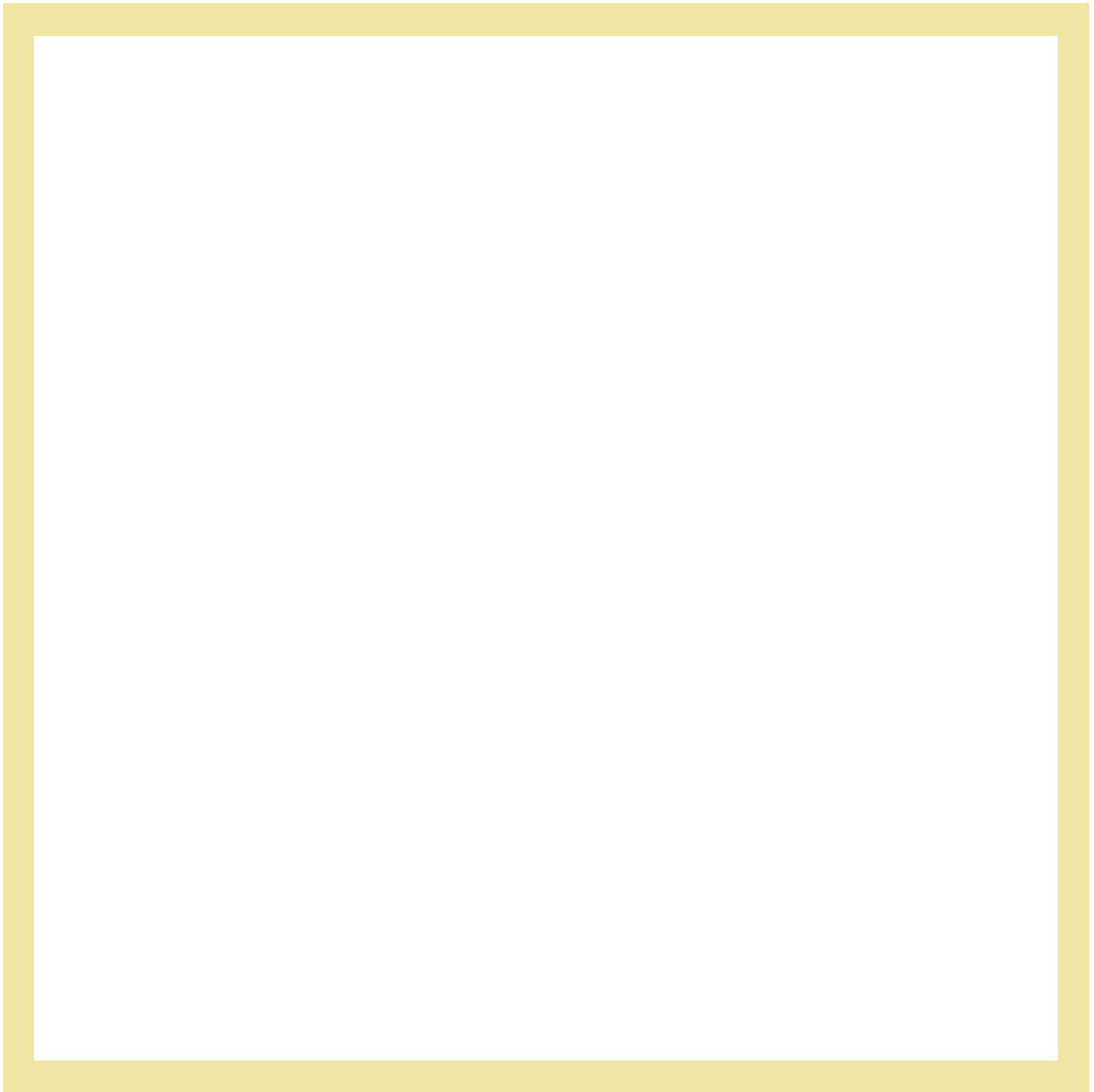
1. Whether God predestines some to grace and glory?

2. Whether God reprobates some?

3. Whether election is based on the divine foreknowledge of merits?

Predestination and the Book of Life (ST 1.23-24)

Notes:



Omnicausality, Human Freedom, and Contingency

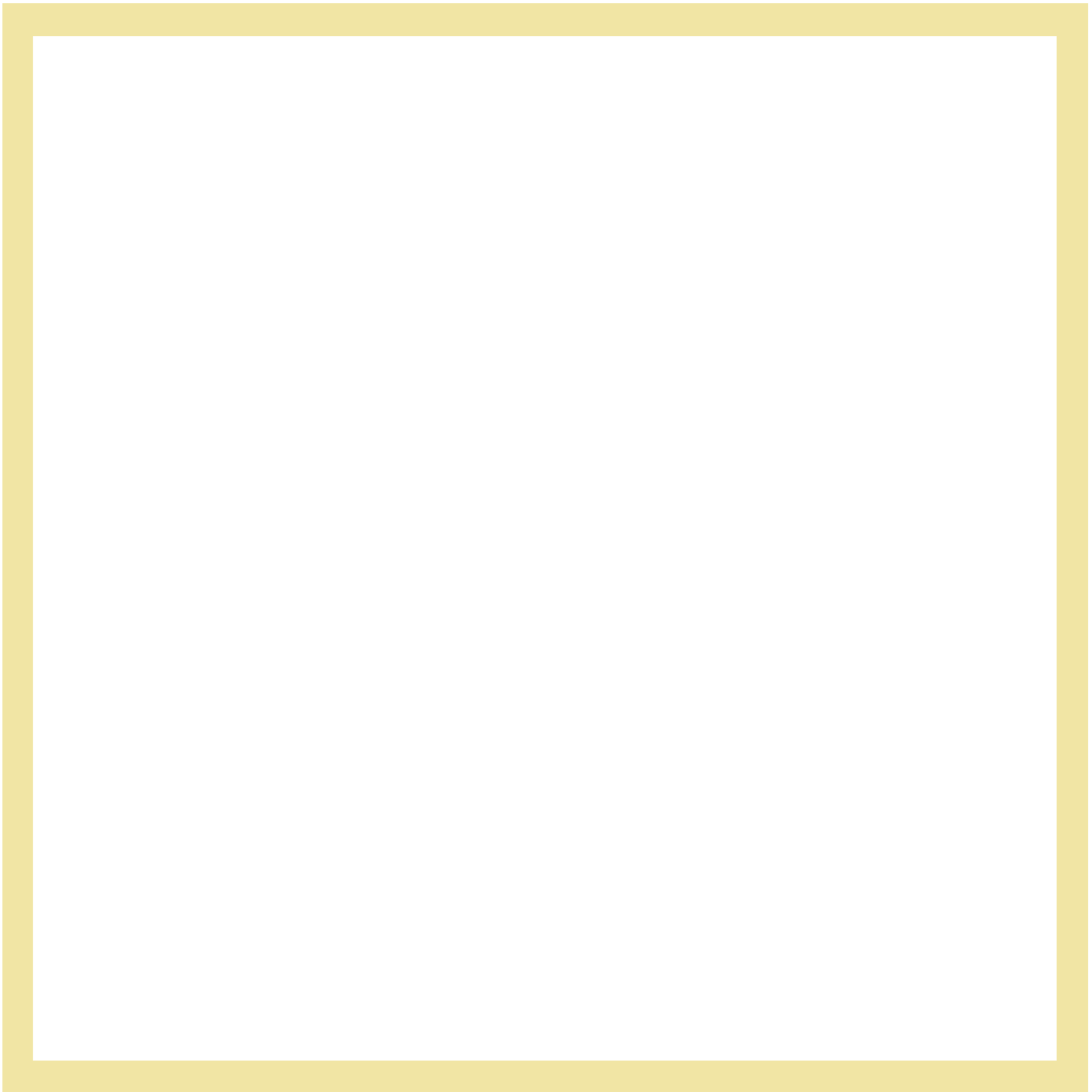
1. What is the meaning of “omnicausality”?

2. Distinguish libertarian freedom from voluntariness?

3. Why is libertarian freedom absurd?

Omnicausality, Human Freedom, and Contingency

Notes:



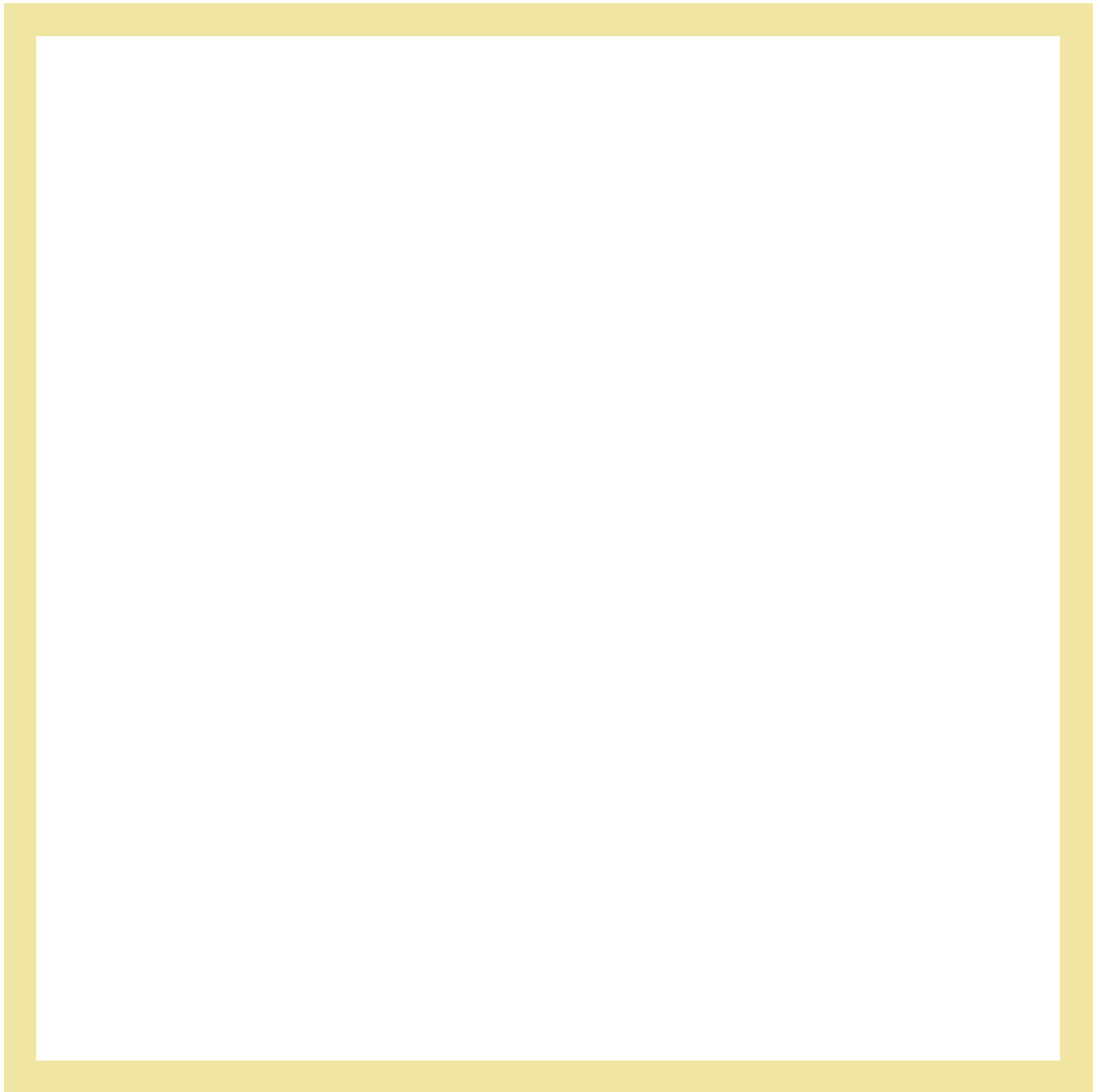
Modern Alternatives

Reading: (<https://seop.illc.uva.nl/entries/process-theism/>)

1. Why do some modern theologians reject immutability?
2. How does process theology address the problem of evil?
3. How is process theology connected to pantheism?
4. What is the core concept of the new model of God?

Modern Alternatives

Notes:



The Indispensable Truths of Classical Theism

1. Whether classical theism is coherent?

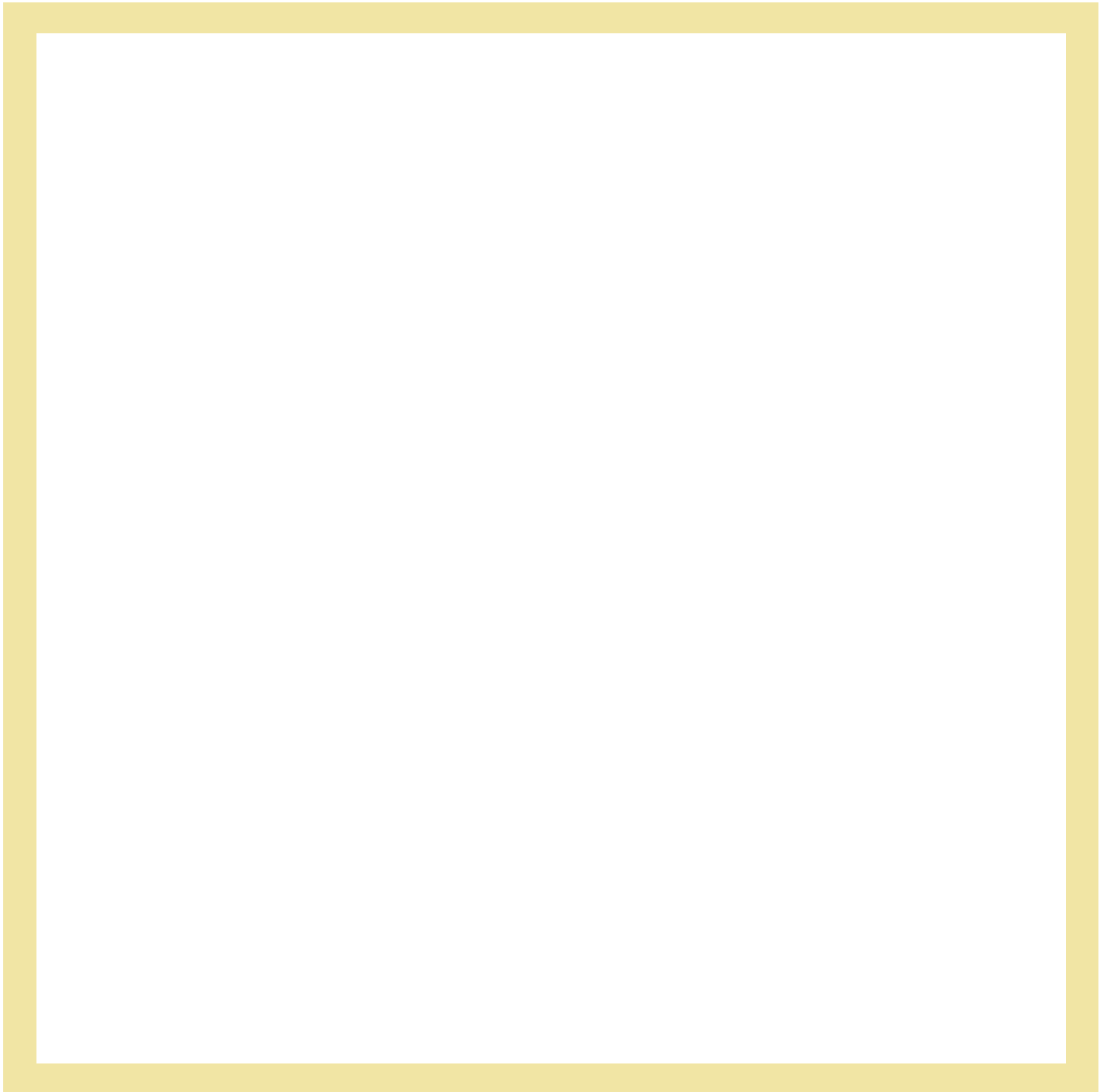
2. Whether classical theism is based on sound philosophical principles and reasoning?

3. Whether classical theism demonstrates the error of agnosticism and atheism?

4. Whether classical theism effectively demonstrates the transcendence of God and the total dependence of all creatures on God?

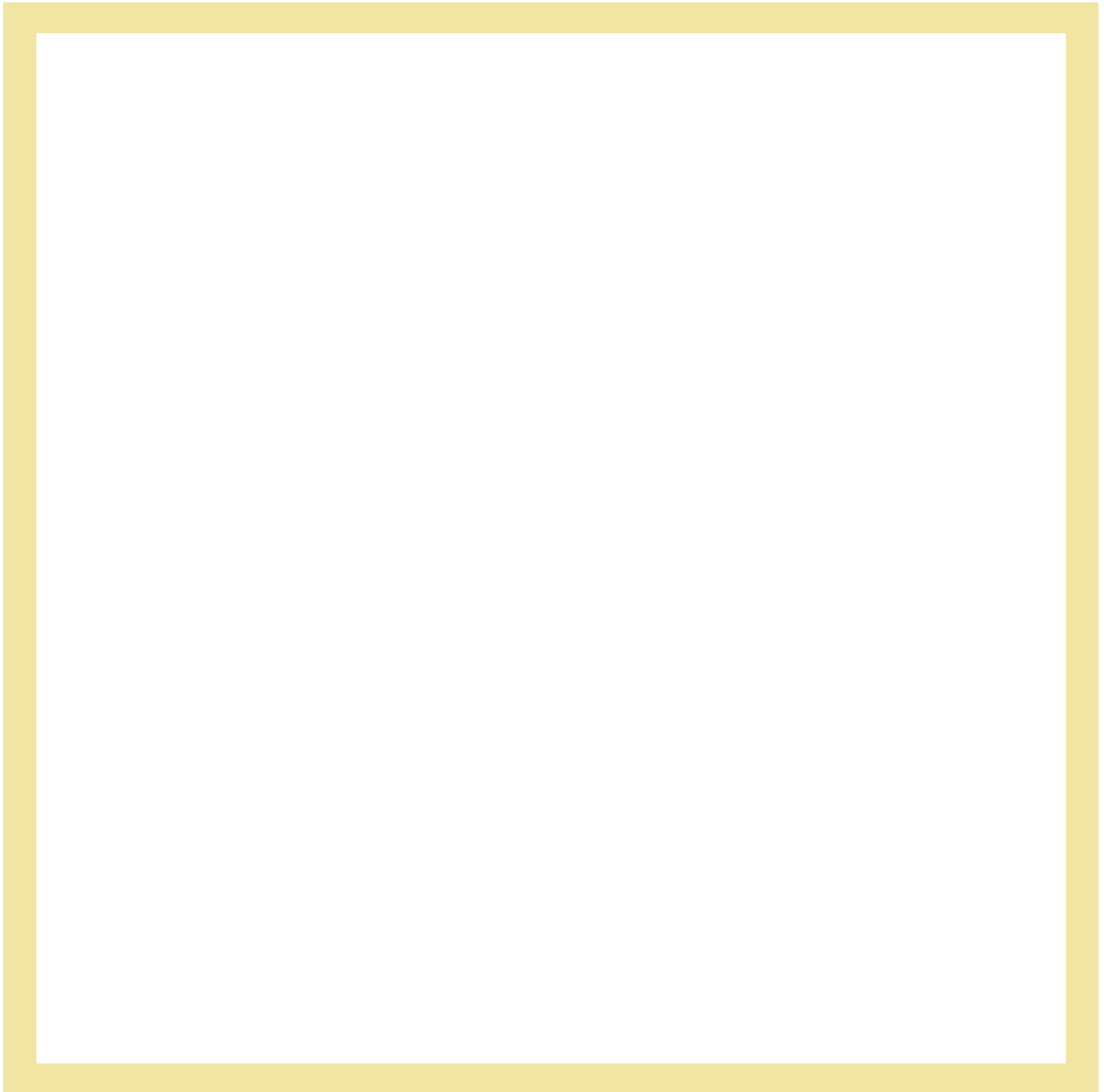
The Indispensable Truths of Classical Theism

Notes:



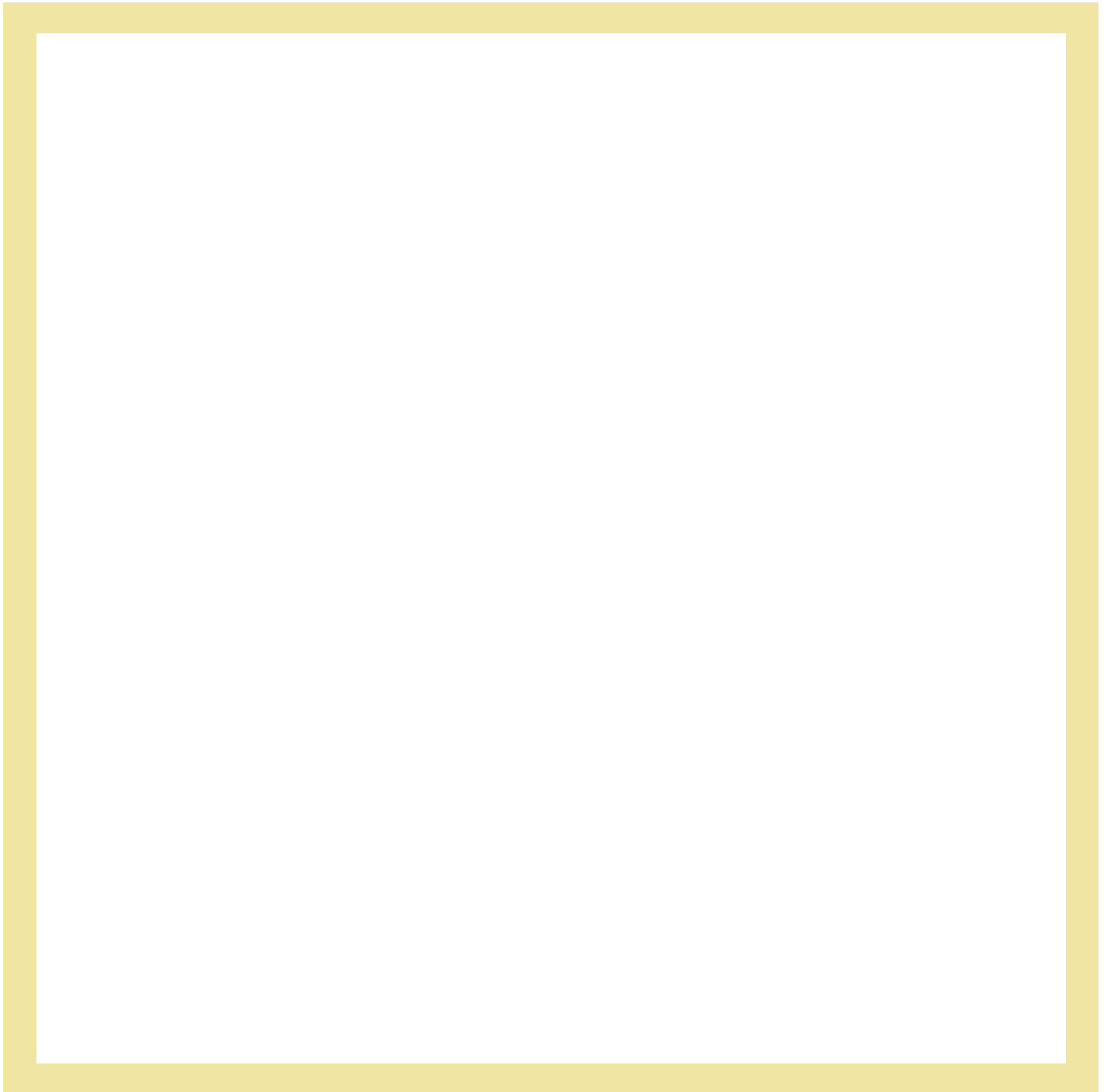
Notes

Notes:



Notes

Notes:



Notes

Notes:

