Phil 2301 Intro to Phil
St. Thomas Aquinas' "Five Ways" of proving God's existence
(*Summa Theologica,* Part One, Question Two)

1. The first way: motion

a. Things do move (motion is the most obvious form of change).

b. Change is passing from potency to act (that is, from potentiality to actuality).

c. Nothing passes from potency to act except by something that is in act, for it is impossible for a potentiality to actualize itself.

d. There cannot be an infinite regress of actualizers or movers. If there is no first mover, there can be no subsequent motion, since all subsequent motion depends on prior movers for its motion.

e. Therefore, there must be a first unmoved mover, a pure act or actualizer with no potentiality in it which is unactualized.

f. Everyone understands this to be GOD!

2. The second way: efficient cause

a. There are efficient causes in the world, that is, producing causes.

b. Nothing can be the efficient cause of itself, for it would have to be prior to itself in order to cause itself).

c. There cannot be an infinite regress of essentially related efficient causes, for unless there is a first cause of the series there would be no causality in the series.

d. Therefore, there must be a first uncaused efficient cause of all efficient causality in the world.

e. Everyone gives to this the name of GOD!

3. The third way: possibility and necessity

a. There are beings that begin to exist and cease to exist, that is, possible, contingent beings.

b. But not all beings can be possible beings, because what comes to exist does so only through what already exists; nothing cannot cause something.

c. Therefore, there must be a Being whose existence is necessary, that is, one that never came into being and will never cease to be.

d. There cannot be an infinite regress of necessary beings each of which has its necessity dependent on another, because:

1. An infinite regress of dependent causes is impossible.
2. A necessary Being cannot be a dependent being.

e. Therefore, there must be a first Being which is necessary in itself, and not dependent on another for its existence.

f. Everyone understands this to be GOD!

4. The fourth way: degree or gradation (of perfection in things)

a. There are different degrees to perfections among beings, for some are more nearly perfect than others.

b. But things cannot be more or less perfect unless there is a wholly perfect being.

c. Whatever is perfect is the cause of the less than perfect (the higher is the cause of the lower).

d. Therefore, there must be a perfect Being which is the cause of perfections of the less than perfect beings.

e. This we call GOD!

5. The fifth way: design

a. We see that things that lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end.

b. They achieve their end not by chance, but by design.

c. Now whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end unless it be directed toward that end by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence, as the arrow is directed by the archer.

d. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are ordered to their end;

e. This being we call God.

6. The generic argument behind all five arguments

a. Some dependent beings exist.
b. All dependent beings and their characteristics must have a cause for their dependent existence.
c. An infinite regress of existentially dependent causes is impossible.
d. Therefore, there must be a first uncaused Cause of the existence of every dependent being and its characteristics.
e. This independent Being is identical with the I AM of Holy Scripture.