PHI 171 – PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY – FALL 2015

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ASSIGNMENT #1 – DUE WED SEPTEMBER 16TH

This assignment tests your ability to understand and reconstruct philosophical arguments. Your answers should be typed and written in good and clear English. *Be precise!* Do not write in essay form. The expected length of this assignment is 2-3 pages.

1   CAN THERE BE AN INFINITE REGRESS OF CAUSES?

Recall the *You Tube* video we watched and discussed in class on Wed September 9th. In it, Willian Lane Craig explains why the existence of an infinite regress of causes is contradictory and thus impossible. Reconstruct his argument by doing the following:
  (a) Identify the claim (or the conclusion) of the argument;
  (b) Write down the steps (or premises) leading up to the claim (or the conclusion); and
  (c) For each step (or premise), explain in a few sentences why you agree or disagree.

2   CAN THE UNIVERSE HAVE A BEGINNING?

Read carefully:

> Let's suppose for the sake of argument that the universe—which we shall define as the *totality* of what exists—has a beginning. For the universe to have a beginning, there must have been a time when the universe came into existence and there must have been an earlier time when the universe did not yet exist. If there was a time when the universe did not exist, there was a time when *nothing* existed. But, when nothing exists, the coming into existence of things is impossible, because something cannot come out of nothing. So, if there were a time when nothing existed, the universe could not be generated and thus would not exist. This is clearly false, for the universe does exist. Hence, we must reject the initial supposition that the universe has a beginning.

Reconstruct the above argument by doing (a), (b) and (c) as in exercise 1.

3   AQUINAS' THIRD WAY

Reconstruct Aquinas's third argument ("the third way") that God exists by doing (a), (b) and (c) as in exercise 1.