Examine the main strengths and weakness of the Cosmological argument for the existence of God. Consider the view that the weaknesses are more convincing than the strengths. (20)

Unlike the Design argument, which argues for the existence of God based upon the sheer complexity of the design of the world, the Cosmological argument approaches the debate from a different slant. The word 'cosmological' originates from the Greek language, and is translated to mean 'order'. The argument essentially argues that the universe's existence must be down to causes outside the universe itself, and that therefore the only explanation for this existence is that a first, primary cause (First Causer) must have existed to set off a chain of causes and effects in an orderly fashion to make up what we know today as the universe.

Many philosophers have taken the argument on board, and over time it has developed. Plato, Aristotle, and through to F.C. Copleston have all had a role in expanding and building upon the original argument. One of the main strengths of the Cosmological argument is its logical reasoning. F.C. Copleston took the argument and reformulated it as three premises, all of which follow each other in logical steps. His first premise states that some things exist that do not have a reason to exist, for example humans. His second premise steps up from the first in saying that the world consists largely of these objects, and his third premise goes on to say that the explanation of these must lie outside the universe. This ability to tackle the explanation of the existence of God and the universe in a rational way indeed adds to its plausibility. The Cosmological argument denies the idea of infinite regress, adding again to its believability. Infinite regress refers to a series of causes and events that are all logically related to each other without the existence of one cause that initiates the series. The argument claims that infinite regress is irrational and impossible, as the world is finite and must have therefore had a point of formation. On these grounds, the Kalam argument (a version of the Cosmological argument), as developed by al-Kindi and al-Ghazali, concludes that as the universe came into being, it must therefore have a cause. Both Aquinas (in his second way) and F.C. Copleston agreed that infinite regress is impossible in terms of a series of contingent events. A chain of infinite contingent beings must consist entirely of contingent beings, all of which as reliant on the previous contingent being for its existence. If this be true, then the chain could never come into existence, as for this to happen there must be one being that is not dependant upon another for its existence. F.C. Copleston, as cited in *The Existence of God*, said "An infinite series of contingent beings will be, to my way of thinking, as unable to cause itself as one contingent being". Copleston therefore argued that a series of contingent beings (eg. the continual fall of dominos in a line, each domino caused to fall due to the previous domino falling onto it) can never be infinite, otherwise there would be no such series to begin with as contingent beings cannot cause themselves to, in the example of the dominos, fall. To strengthen the idea of the need for a first, necessary cause further,

advocators refer to modern science which has also identified the need for a first cause for the existence of the universe through theories such as the 'Big Bang'.

The argument is not a Christian based argument, and Plato in particular could not understand how the universe could exist without a primary first cause or mover. Plato identified that motion, causes and effects are linked. All around we are able to see the link between cause and effect, such as moving an object. Plato said that, logically speaking, there must always be power to produce motion (or a cause) prior to passing on this power and prior to the object receiving it and hence moving (effect). Therefore, he argued, there must have been a first (or prime) mover that begins that motion, whom itself is self-caused. Being able to link the argument to real-life situations to prove a connection between cause and effect again adds to the arguments believability. Seeing that the world itself is made up of series of events (for example: a seed is planted; the seed grows to a tree; the tree bares fruit; a human eats the fruit) must therefore show that there must have been a cause to set off such chains of events, just like a mover first causes an object to move. Aquinas, a Christian philosopher, went on to say that the explanation for the universe and indeed its chains of events must be found outside the universe. He, in his "second way from cause" argued that this first cause must be God.

In Aquinas' second way, however, some philosophers have found a weakness. Aquinas conclusion that God must have been the first mover causes many to criticize his premise, as the idea of the existence of a first cause does not demand that this first cause be God. Even more so, the idea of a first mover does not imply that this first mover be the God referred to by classical theism. The God of Muslims, Christians and Jews is told as being a caring, loving God who is still present and playing a vital part in our lives today. The Cosmological argument, however, only explains the existence of a God, but does not advance further in arguing that he is still a necessary being vital for the continued existence of the universe.

Quantum physics also brings about weaknesses in the argument. Some schools of quantum mechanics claim that the existence of particles is down to probability. Experiments have shown empty space swarms with ephemeral particles that exist for no longer than the time taken by a light beam to cross an atomic nucleus, with no apparent cause for their existence. This of course, hit's the Cosmological argument at its core. The premise that cause and effect are always linked, with reference to Quantum physics, fails flatly. When applied to the universe, Quantum physics removes the need for a necessary being to beginthe chain of causes and effects, and indeed the existence of God. Whether such particles do actually have a cause or not is a matter of debate, and some have said that the cause has just not been discovered as of yet, and in fact when the cause is found, Quantum physics can only be a support to the Cosmological argument.

Another problem of the argument is hit when the realism of its premises is considered. Aquinas in his first way "from motion" argument begins by making conclusions based on evidence, making the arguments *aposteriori.* Aquinas states that nothing can move itself, since nothing can be both mover and moved, yet things are evidently in motion. Evidence can be used to support this premise, such as the example of a line of dominos. A domino cannot move itself, and instead relies on the falling of the previous domino which would cause itself to fall, yet evidently the dominos are in motion . He then goes on to state that this chain of motion cannot be infinite, otherwise it could not have a first mover and subsequently no other mover. In other words, using the domino example again, the chain of falling dominos can never be infinite because it always must have a first cause to set it of (ie. someone to push the first domino). The premises up to this point, then, are based on factual evidence, and can be backed up with examples from everyday life. However, his conclusions from this point onwards are essentially *apriori,* as they are independent of actual experience and are instead based upon reasoning. Aquinas concludes that this first cause must God, and this is where the weakness lies. Critics, such as David Hume, have argued that even though it is logical to accept the necessity of a first cause, it is illogical to then conclude that this cause be God. Being *apriori,* the argument that this first being is God cannot be backed up by hard evidence, and instead depends on reasoning that cannot be supported definitely.

The Cosmological argument is undoubtedly logically in its progression, as each premise follows the other, backed up with universal evidence. However, the fact that it is logical does not mean the explanation is a correct one. Some philosophers have argued that the existence of the universe is far more complex for our brains to be able to comprehend, and hence on these terms the Cosmological argument, being simple and straightforward, fails. This gives one of the few strengths of the argument cause for doubt. The formation of the universe cannot itself be a simple and uncomplicated process, and hence the explanation of the universe cannot likewise be as easy and minimal as the Cosmological argument claims.

The Cosmological argument seeks to find a complete explanation or "sufficient reason" (Gottfried Leibniz) for the existence of the universe. The argument reaches the conclusion that God is the ultimate and complete explanation for the universe. While Leibniz saw the arguments strength to explain sufficiently the existence of the universe, other philosophers do not. Over this, Russell and Copleston famously debated. Russell argued that one can never know when an explanation is adequate. David Hume questioned why we need to seek a complete explanation when partial explanations can be quite sufficient. He said that should we be able to explain the causes of, say, each particle out of a group of twenty, it would be unreasonable to go on to ask what the cause of the whole twenty would be. If we have explained each part of a series, have we not explained the whole? This undermines, then, the

Cosmological strength in that God is a complete and sufficient explanation for the universe as we can never know what actually is a sufficient explanation, and therefore, we cannot conclude that God be the whole explanation to the universe.

The argument, however, does seem concrete with its links between cause and effect. The connection between the two can be seen all around. This gives the argument a lasting appeal. There is evidently a connection between a hand releasing a ball (cause) and the ball hitting the floor (effect) - or is there? One of the most credible premises of the argument has come under scrutiny by both modern science and philosophers. Famously, David Hume has claimed that humans allow themselves mistakenly to make a connection between cause and effect, saying that though we observe a conjunction of events, they are in fact two separate events occurring at separate times. He argued that it is just the habit of the mind to make a connection between two events - a process called induction. Modern science has also triggered the cause-effect link to be put under scrutiny, particularly as Quantum scientists have seen some particles come into existence without a specific cause. On these grounds, then, one may argue that the weakness of the argument definitely outweigh its strengths. However, Hume's criticism of the cause-effect connection seems illogical and irrational. Isaac Newton's first law of inertia dictates that an external force must be applied to an object in order for that object to move, and hence states that the external force (cause) makes the object move (effect) where a connection is obvious. Quantum physics is under much debate currently, as some argue that there must be a cause for such particles to come into existence, yet this cause is just currently not known. These reasons, then, argue against the idea that the weaknesses of the argument are more convincing that the strengths, because Hume's weakness can seem completely unreasonable especially in terms of Newton's first law of inertia, and the Quantum physics weakness can also seem unreasonable as lack of cause demonstrates a lack of knowledge, demanding scientists look further into the explanation.

In conclusion, then, the view that the weaknesses are more convincing than the strengths can be supported by way of scientific evidence and the need for a more complex explanation. However, its strength as an *a posteriori* argument remains, as it takes its evidence from real everyday life, such as the domino example. Each domino depends on the other for its fall, and the first domino is dependant on an external force for its falling. Whether this real-life example can be applied to the seemingly far more complex formation of the universe, though, is still a matter of debate.