Aquinas taught that although the proposition “God created the World” is true, and although there is a reality existing in the World which corresponds to its having been thus created, there is no such reality in God corresponding to his having created it. The World’s relation to God is a real relation: that of God to the World a relation only of reason. The theological motivation for this doctrine is to be sought in the need to forestall objections to two other doctrines, that of the Divine Simplicity and that of the Necessity and Eternity of all that exists in God. The former has the consequence that the distinction between the various predicates we ascribe to God, “wise”, “powerful”, “just”, for example, is not mirrored by any distinction between the corresponding attributes existing in God: what is referred to as “God’s wisdom” is the very same thing as what is referred to as “God’s power” and this thing is God himself. But it is hardly possible that “God’s having created the World” is another phrase which only refers to God himself; it is obvious to the theist, if not to the pantheist, that the phrase refers as well to something other than God. The doctrine that all that exists in God is necessary and eternal is also apparently inconsistent with a real relation of God to creatures. For it is held to be only contingently true that God created anything, nor has it always been true that there is something which God has created. A relation really existing in God corresponding to his having created the World would therefore be something which would never have existed if the World had not come into existence and which could not have existed before the World did so. The solution of the difficulty seemed to be found in denying that any such relation really existed in God at all.

Aquinas’s view on this matter has recently been discussed and defended by Professor P. T. Geach in a paper entitled “God’s Relations to the World” (Sophia, July, 1969). There is some connection between this and the views that Geach puts forward in an earlier paper, “What Actually Exists?” in the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume XLII, 1968 (reprinted in P. T. Geach, God and the Soul, Rout-
ledge and Kegan Paul, 1969). I do not wish here to discuss
the notion of an actuality corresponding to the predicate of a
ture relational proposition and existing in one or both of the
terms of the relation. I am not myself convinced that all is
well with such a notion, nor indeed with the wider notion of
actual existence which it involves. My purpose in this paper
is the negative one of showing the insufficiency of the analogies
drawn by Geach and Aquinas between relational propositions
about God and other relational propositions, some of Aristotelian
with this notion, which it involves. My purpose in this paper
is the negative one of showing the insufficiency of the analogies
drawn by Geach and Aquinas between relational propositions
about God and other relational propositions, some of Aristotelian
vintage, which are thought to provide further examples of this
phenomenon of a one-sided relationship.

Geach claims, and I have no difficulty in following him
in this, that a proposition such as “God is Lord of the whole
Earth” can be construed, not only as being of the form “aRb”,
but also as being of the form “Fa’” or of the form “Fb”. It is
properly describable either as saying of God that he is Lord of
the whole Earth or as saying of the whole Earth that God is its
Lord. This, Geach holds, leaves it open to us to distinguish be-
tween the two latter analyses on the following grounds: having
God as its Lord is not only truly predicated of, but answers to an
actuality in, the whole Earth: whereas being Lord of the whole
Earth does not so answer to an actuality in God, though it is truly
predicated of him. The phrase “answering to an actuality” is no
doubt capable of more than one interpretation. But the interpreta-
tion of it which would best fit in with the views Geach has else-
where expressed is one which I find unacceptable. He believes, I
think, that in some cases where we truly predicate something of an
individual, e.g. yellowness of a lump of butter, there is an
“individualized form” — the yellowness of this butter — cor-
responding to the predicative expression “is yellow” just as the
butter itself corresponds to the subject-expression “this butter”.
I am nominalist enough to have serious doubts about the ex-
istence of actual accidents of this sort. If something like this is
what is meant by the actuality which exists in the whole Earth
and answers to the predicate “having God as its Lord”, I am
inclined to be just as sceptical about its existence as Geach is
about an actuality in God answering to his Lordship over all the
Earth.

In fact Geach does not press this business of “answering
to an actuality”. He passes very quickly to an illustration which
draws on the distinction between real and merely “Cambridge”
changes. When Edith comes to envy Herbert there is a real
change in Edith but may be only a Cambridge one in Herbert.

(1) This terminology was first introduced, to the best of my knowledge,
into the literature by Professor Geach in his Aristotelian Society paper