Amongst the most often read, quoted and commented upon propositions of the Liber de causis, pride of place undoubtedly belongs to the fourth, the lemma of which claims: “the first of created things is being, and there is nothing else created before it”. The fascination it has exercised over Latin authors from the 13th century onwards is perhaps only equal to the interpretative problems it has raised. Its distant source can be found in Proclus’ Elements of Theology (especially propositions 89 and 138). It reflects one of the most important features of the doctrinal innovation begun during the process of adapting Pro-
clean metaphysics to Mu'tazilite philosophy. This can be seen especially in the introduction of the idea of creation and of the identification between the first principle and being, in the direct link forged between being and the divine efficient cause, and furthermore, in the elimination of the Proclean doctrine of being as an intelligible form, superior to intellect itself. In these pages I shall concentrate on a very unusual aspect of the reception of the fourth proposition: that is, the fact of referring to it as the “first,” and not as the “fourth”. In the present state of my research, this interesting anomaly is found in only two works: the Quaestiones super Metaphysicam, conserved in the manuscript Escorial, h. 11. 1, of which I am currently preparing the critical edition, and the Summa (Quaestiones Ordinariae) by Henry of Ghent. I will analyse the passages in which the fourth proposition of the Liber the causis is called “first” from a philological point of view (but without neglecting the doctrinal one) in order to (1) describe this rare phenomenon, (2) provide a possible explanation for it, (3) add a new piece to the puzzle of the relation between the Quaestiones super Metaphysicam and the authentic works of Henry of Ghent (Summa and Quodlibeta). As is well known, the attribution of the Quaestiones super Metaphysicam to Henry of Ghent is still an open question. Finally, as a hint of the texts I shall be examining, I would like to indicate other lines of research which could contribute to our knowledge of the contexts in which the fourth proposition of the Book of Causes played a significant role in 13th-century philosophical debates.

1 Some Readings of the Fourth Proposition in the 13th Century

From the second half of the 13th century—that is, once the Liber de causis had become required reading on the curricula of the Paris Faculty of arts—we witness a gradual blossoming of the season of commentaries. These undoubtedly represent a primary point of access for scholars who wish to study the impact of the Liber on its Latin readers. Among the 13th-century commentaries, six have been available in their entirety for some time, though not all of them in critical editions. These are the commentaries by Roger Bacon (probably 1241–

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3 For further details on this aspect see: D’Ancona 1995, p. 121–130; Porro 2012, p. 404–406; Id. 2014a, p. 56–59; Id. 2014b, p. 278–281.
4 For a study of the use of the fourth proposition in the debate on universals in the 15th century see Meliadò 2012, p. 212–225; and Calma 2017, p. 249–297, in particular p. 277–281.
5 As attested by the famous Student’s Guide (c. 1245) of the ms Ripoll 109; see Grabmann 1928, p. 32–33; Lafleur, Carrier 1992, p. 33.
citing the book of causes, iv

1245),\(^6\) pseudo-Henry of Ghent (c. 1250),\(^7\) Albert the Great (1264/67–1268),\(^8\) Thomas Aquinas (1272),\(^9\) Siger of Brabant (probably 1274–1276)\(^10\) and Giles of Rome (c. 1291).\(^11\) Notable progress, likewise, has been made on the unedited commentaries in the context of two research projects led by Dragos Calma. Over sixty commentaries have been added to the fourteen unedited already signalled by Richard Taylor in 1984. Thirteen of these have been fully, others partially, edited.\(^12\) Among those ascribable to the 13th century, we can now include those by pseudo-Peter of Auvergne (1272–1278),\(^13\) Anonymus Sectator philosophie (1274/76–1277?),\(^14\) John of Mallinges (post 1274/1276–ante 1289/1291?),\(^15\) Radulphus Brito? (c. 1290),\(^16\) and Anonymus Super Libellum (second half of

\(^6\) Steele, Delorme 1935. Steele does not expressly thematise either the place of composition (even though he sometimes implies it is Paris) or the date of composition, as D’Ancona has already noted: see Steele 1935, p. xv–xvi; D’Ancona 1995, p. 197. Crowley has proposed dating them between 1241 and 1245; Van Steenenbergen around 1245; see Crowley 1950, p. 72–73 and Van Steenenbergen 1966, p. 144. Both bibliographical references can be found in D’Ancona 1995, p. 197, n. 10. For an overview of other hypotheses, concerning both the chronology and place of composition, as well as the problem of authorship, see also Calma 2018, n. 41.

\(^7\) Zwaenepoel 1974. On the date of composition of the Quaestiones in Librum de causis by pseudo-Henry see Zwaenepoel 1974, p. 14–15.

\(^8\) Fauser 1993. On the date of composition of De causis et processu universitatis a prima causa see Fauser 1993, p. v.

\(^9\) Saffrey 2002. On the date of composition of Super Librum de causis expositio see Saffrey 2002, p. xxxiii–xxxvi.

\(^10\) Marlasca 1972. On the date of composition of the Quaestiones super Librum de causis see Marlasca 1972, p. 29.

\(^11\) Apud Iacobum Zoppinum, Venetiis 1550 (repr. Frankfurt a.M., 1968). In this edition we read that Giles’ Super Librum de causis was completed on 31 June 1291. On the reasons for pushing back the completion date by several months, see Porro 2014a, p. 77, n. 51.

\(^12\) That is, some of the unedited commentaries already indicated by Taylor as well as some that have been identified recently; see Calma 2016a, p. 21.

\(^13\) The Questions super Librum de causis by pseudo-Peter of Auvergne is a commentary per modum quaestionis regarding the first thirteen propositions, with the omission of proposition X (XI) and XII (XIII). The text has been fully edited by Maga 2016, p. 53–135.

\(^14\) The Questions super Librum de causis by the Anonymus Sectator philosophie, is a very short text consisting of only four questions on the first proposition; see Calma 2016a, p. 42–52.

\(^15\) The Reportationes De causis by John of Mallinges presents both a literal exposition of the text and a commentary per modum quaestionis; it terminates with proposition xxvi(xxvii). The text has been edited in its entirety by Baneu, Calma 2016b, p. 153–286.

\(^16\) The Questions super Librum de causis by Radulphus Brito(?) consists of twenty-six questions on ten propositions of the Liber de causis (namely propositions 1–4, 7–8, 10, 13, 15–17, 23–24). It has been fully edited by Costa, Borgo 2016, p. 287–358.
the 13th century?).  

Two further commentaries, on the other hand, were composed between the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century: one by Anonymus Erfordensis (post 1289/1291–inc. 14th century) and another by Anonymus Augsburgensis (post 1289/1291–inc. 14th century). The commentary traditionally ascribed to pseudo-Adamus, which is still unedited, was certainly composed in the 13th century as well. We shall have to await the work in progress on the editions in order to know whether there are still others that are ascribable to the same period.

The interpretation of the fourth proposition in several 13th-century commentaries—but not only these, as we shall see—is the subject of two important recent works by Pasquale Porro. Indeed, it seems that the fourth proposition generated not a few interpretative doubts even in its earliest readers. Except for Roger Bacon, whose exposition seems straightforward, the text already begins to show itself in all its complexity in pseudo-Henry. The main question concerns the identification of the being that is first created. When read as a whole, the text of the fourth proposition suggests interpretations which, if not contradictory, are nevertheless not easy to reconcile. The being created first must indeed be the first created thing, the direct and most authentic product of the first cause, and the most extensive reality. Yet at the same time, it is the first intelligence, in other words, a subsisting reality. In order

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17 The Super Libellum de causis by the Anonymus Super Libellum consists of only two questions on the De causis by Baneu, Calma 2016b, p. 176–178.

18 The Questiones super Librum de causis by the Anonymus Erfordensis is a commentary per modum questionis on 16 propositions (namely propositions 1–5, 9–11, 13–14, 17, 18–20, 22). The text has been fully edited by Székely, Calma 2016, p. 359–466.

19 The Glose super Librum de causis by the Anonymus Augsburgensis is partially edited (the commentary on propositions I and IV). See Baneu, Calma 2016a, p. 137–152.

20 The Scriptum super Librum de causis is preserved in MS Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Conv. Sopp. G. 4, 355, f. 90r–98v, and MS Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Lat. VI, 1 (2821), f. 1r–54v. Cristina D’Ancona has provided a description of its contents, together with a doctrinal analysis of certain points; see D’Ancona 1995, p. 204–214. For a discussion of both the dating and the authorship of the commentary (together with an edition of selected passages of the text) see Calma 2018.

21 See Porro, 2014a; Id. 2014b. Cristina D’Ancona has also dealt with some aspects of the reception of the fourth proposition in the Latin commentaries (especially Thomas Aquinas); see D’Ancona 1995, p. 239–247. She has also conducted an in-depth study on the doctrine of being expounded in the Liber de causis in relation to its Arabic sources; see D’Ancona 1995, p. 121–153 (on the fourth proposition, see in particular p. 121, p. 128–131, p. 138).

22 Liber de causis, IV, 37–38, p. 142: Prima rerum creatarum est esse et non est ante ipsum creatum aliud. Quod est quia esse est supra sensum et supra animam et supra intelligentiam, et non est post causam primam latius neque prius creatum ipso.

23 Liber de causis, IV, 43, p. 143: Quod est quia omne quod ex sequitur causam primam est achili [id est] intelligentia, completa et ultima in potentia et reliquis bonitatis.
to circumvent such an impasse, pseudo-Henry opts for a conciliatory strategy, based on a dual mode of intending creation: if creation means the divine act that concludes in a thing subsisting in itself, then the first of the things created by God will be the first intelligence. If, on the other hand, creation is seen as concreation (concreatio), that is, as something that is created in another, then one can certainly say that being is the first of the created things.²⁴

Later solutions would be less conciliatory than pseudo-Henry's and would opt for either one or the other hypothesis. Albert the Great, for instance, explains in his commentary on *De causis* that the being in question is a simple mental concept, so broad as to comprehend every thing,²⁵ it is indeed called intelligence, but in the sense of a concept.²⁶ Thomas Aquinas' interpretation in his commentary on *De causis*, however, is the opposite. The first object of creation is a separate intellectual substance, that is, the first intelligence. The being named at the beginning of the fourth proposition, which Aquinas considers almost like a preamble,²⁷ is precisely the being of the first intelligence.

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²⁴ Pseudo-Henry of Ghent, *Quaestiones in Librum de causis*, q. 24, p. 61–62, l. 44–53: *Verum-tamen intelligendum quod creatio terminatur ad creatum duplici modo: aut tamquam ad aliquid existens (in se), aut aliquid existens in alio. Primo modo solum habet creari illud quod est completum in esse per formam ultimam completivam specificam, et hoc proprie dicitur creari. Secundo modo habent creari omnia essentialia quae sunt in tali creato primo modo, et dicuntur proprie concreari sive creari in aliis. De creatione primo modo habet intelligi quod dicitur in commento: causatum primum est intelligentia. Tamen de creatione secundo modo verificatur theorema, scilicet: prima rerum creatarum (est) esse."

²⁵ Albert the Great, *De causis et processu universitatis a prima causa*, lib. II, t. 1, c. 17, p. 81, l. 19–43: "Esse enim simplex mentis conceptus est ad nihil formatum vel determinatum, quo quaelibet res esse dicitur, cum de ipsa quaeritur per quaestionem, an sit. [...] Esse enim, quod dicto modo simplex conceptus est et informis et in quo sicut in ultimo stat resoluto, non nisi causae primae creaturum esse potest. [...] Nihil ergo sequentium potest fieri per creationem. Sequens enim se habet ad praecedens ut informans ipsum et determinans."

²⁶ Albert the Great, *De causis et processu universitatis a prima causa*, lib. II, t. 1, c. 19, p. 83, l. 61–75: "Quando autem dicimus esse intelligentiam simplicem, non intelligimus, quod sit intelligentia, quaie substantia intellectualis est in decem ordines multiplicata [...] sed quod est intelligentia, hoc est forma a lumine intellectus agentis in esse producta et in simplici illo lumine per intentionem accepta [...] Sic enim et Aristoteles loquitur in 111 De anima, ubi dicit: "intelligentia igitur indivisibilium est, in quibus non est verum. In quibus autem verum et falsum est, iam compositio quaedam intellectuum est". Talis igitur "intelligentia" sive conceptus esse compositus "est ex finito et infinito," ex duabus quas habet habitudinis tamen."

²⁷ Thomas of Aquinas, *Super Librum de causis expositio*, p. 27, l. 1–11: "In hoc tamen aliter procedit quam in alis; nam in omnibus aliis praemittit propositionem et posita propositionem praemissam probat, hic autem more dividentium primo praemittit quod commune est, secundo illud dividit [...]. Id autem quod est commune omnibus intelligentiis distinctis est esse creatum primum, de quo quidem praemittit talem propositionem: "Prima rerum creatarum est esse et non est ante ipsam creatum alium."
Thus it is not a separate form, as in the Platonic model, nor a being in which all creatures participate, as in pseudo-Dionysius.28

The different interpretations of the fourth proposition provided by Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas within the tradition of commentaries on De causis would be the basis for the respective readings by Henry of Ghent and Giles of Rome almost a decade later. The context, though, is different: it is the famous debate on the status of the difference between being and essence, which is intentional for Henry and real for Giles. The debate, which began around 1276, was rekindled in 1286 after Giles’ return to Paris.29 It is Henry, however, who introduces the use of the fourth proposition in the debate, notably in q. 7 of Quodlibet x (Christmas 1286). Drawing elements from Albert’s reading, Henry gives a very original interpretation, on which he would later ground his entire metaphysical system. To state it with extreme brevity: the first created being, the only proper product of creation, is the being of essence (esse essentiae) that is in potency with respect to the being intended in an existential sense (esse existentiae). Between the two there is a purely intentional distinction, as Henry is able to demonstrate by referring yet again to the fourth proposition (this time to the complementary propositions) as well as to the eighteenth.30 The following year, in 1287, in q. 12 of his Quaestiones de esse et essentia, Giles forcefully confutes Henry’s reading. According to Giles, the fourth proposition, correctly interpreted, would serve instead to demonstrate that being and essence are distinct in reality.31 Henry would later defend his arguments in detail in q. 3 of Quodlibet xi,32 which, we believe, represents the final chapter of his dispute with Giles.33 I shall return to some aspects of this debate later on.

28 Thomas of Aquinas, Super Librum de causis expositio, p. 29, l. 8–12: Videtur tamen non esse eius intentio ut loquatur de aliquo esse separato, sicut Platonici loquebantur, neque de esse participato communiter in omnibus existentibus, sicut loquitur Dionysius, sed de esse participato in primo gradu entis creati, quod est esse superius.
29 An excellent reconstruction of the debate between Henry, Giles and Godfrey, and its theoretical presuppositions, is provided by König–Pralong 2006, p. 11–126.
30 Henry of Ghent, Quodl. x, q. 7, p. 171–174.
31 Giles of Rome, Quaestiones de esse et essentia, q. 12, f. 27ra–29rb.
32 Henry of Ghent, Quodl. xi, q. 3, f. 442ve–443rG.
33 I refer the reader to the works by Porro mentioned above (I’ve confined myself to summarising a few points from them) for a detailed analysis of the passages cited and their respective interpretation; see Porro 2014a, p. 67–79.
The Fourth Proposition as the “First” in the *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam*

2.1 *The Quaestiones super Metaphysicam in Ms. Escorial, h. II. 1: Preliminary Information*

Amongst the medieval commentaries on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* that are still unedited (whether wholly or partially) there is the one discovered by G. Antolin in 1911. In the *Catalogue*, the fruit of his research on the manuscripts held in the Real Biblioteca de El Escorial (Madrid), Antolin indicated that Ms. Escorial, h. II.1 preserves in its first seventy-three folios (f. 1ra–73rb) a commentary *per modum quaestionis* on the first six books of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. The text, bequeathed with the title *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam*, had been attributed by a modern hand to Henry of Ghent. Before arriving in the Real Biblioteca de El Escorial it had belonged to the great humanist and bibliophile, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza (1504–1575), who in 1575 bequeathed his entire library, including this manuscript, to King Philip II. Already by the end of the 16th century, MS h. II. 1 was registered in the general catalogue of Latin manuscripts held in the Escorial Library as “Henricus de Gandavo Archidioconus Tornacensis in Metaphysicam Aristotelis”. The date of the manuscript, established on the basis of paleographic criteria (writing typology and abbreviations) ranges from the end of the 13th century to the beginning of the 14th century. The commentary comprises 325 *quaestiones* subdivided as follows:

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34 For the unedited commentaries on the *Metaphysics* ascribable to the 13th century, apart from the classic and valuable works by Albert Zimmermann (see Zimmermann 1998, p. 23–116 and 1971, p. 49–145), see the recent contributions by Silvia Donati on the English commentaries datable before Duns Scotus (see Donati 2014, p. 137–207), and by Sten Ebbesen on some Parisian commentaries composed between 1270 and 1290 (see Ebbesen 2014, p. 277–314). For a general introduction to the medieval Latin commentaries on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, I refer the reader to the recent volume edited by Amerini and Galluzzo, which provides an excellent and up-to-date introduction to the theme, with attention to both philological and doctrinal aspects (see Amerini, Galluzzo 2014).

35 I am currently preparing the critical edition of the *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam* preserved in the Ms Escorial, h. II. 1. In the present study I give only a brief description of some aspects of the manuscript and text, reserving a more detailed exposition for the publication of the critical edition.

36 Cf. Antolín 1911, p. 303–305; Grabmann 1928, p. 70–88; Zwaenepoel 1974, p. vii–xv; Macken 1979, p. 253–259; Dondaine, Schooner 1967, p. 289–290; Porro 2002, p. 513–516.

37 Antolín 1911, p. 331.

38 Indeed, in the lower margin of the *recto* of the first *folio*, we read: *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam Magistri Henrici de Gandavo*.

39 The various hypotheses put forward on the dating of the manuscript do tend to diverge. According to R. Macken and J. Duin, the manuscript dates to the 13th–14th century (see
q. 1–33 (f. 1ra–6va) are dedicated to the first book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, q. 34–50 (f. 6va–10va) to the second, q. 98–118 (f. 11ra–16rb) to the third, q. 119–136 (f. 16rb–24va) to the fourth, q. 137–301 (f. 25va–68va) to the fifth, and q. 302–325 (f. 68va–73rb) to the sixth.

The first scholar to analyse the manuscript more closely was Martin Grabmann. Partly because of the doctrine of truth explicated in it, he expressed a decidedly positive judgement in favour of Henry's authorship. The general tendency of those who have since devoted their attention to the *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam*, from J. Paulus to M. Pickavé, has been more sceptical, when indeed not openly contrary. In a long article published in 2002, Pasquale Porro, to whom I also refer the reader for an in-depth reconstruction of the history of attributions of the text to Henry, has provided the first ever edition of some *quaestiones* related to the fourth and sixth books of the *Metaphysics*. His work has at least two merits. In the first place, it provides the textual basis for a more serious enquiry into the *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam*. The edition is accompanied by a comparative doctrinal study, articulated around five thematic points: the concept of truth, the subject of metaphysics, the doctrine of *duplex esse*, the classification of sciences and the doctrine of subalternation. This study has revealed a crucial affinity, if not a veritable accord, between the doctrinal elaboration in the *Quaestiones*, on the one hand, and Henry's *Summa* and *Quodlibeta*, on the other. The existing differences between the texts, which could reflect different levels of intellectual maturity, are not so great as to cast a shadow over a possible attribution to Henry.

Macken 1979, p. 253 and Duin 1954, p. 154). The editors of Aquinas' *Opuscula* propose the beginning of the 14th century (see *Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia*, 43, 1976, p. 7, 98, 138, 165, 324), while the editors of Aquinas' commentaries on *De sensu* and *De memoria* push the date to back the 15th century (see *Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia*, 45/2, 1985, p. 3).

See Grabmann 1928, p. 83–98, in particular p. 85–87.

On the authenticity of the *Quaestiones*, J. Paulus, J. Gómez Caffarena and L.-J. Bataillon have all expressed a degree of scepticism; see Paulus 1938, p. XVIII–XIX; Gómez Caffarena 1958, p. 24–25, n. 41 and p. 271; Bataillon 1960, p. 164. Such scepticism then gave way to a veritable mistrust of the Henrican authorship in Laarmann (see Laarmann 1999, p. 44) and, following him, in Pickavé too (see Pickavé 2001, p. 493). A. Zimmermann has undertaken a comparative examination of the opinions expressed on the subject of the metaphysics in the *Quaestiones* and the *Summa*, but without assuming any position himself on the problem of authorship; see Zimmermann 1998, p. 235–250. For a detailed analysis of the respective positions, see Porro 2002, p. 527–530.

In response to Porro's study, Martin Pickavé has raised further doubts about the authenticity, which he considers "rather unlikely". The most problematic points, in Pickavé's view, concern the divergences on the status of the *passiones* of being and, more generally, the different conception of how metaphysics should proceed (demonstrative for Henry, defini-
Despite the fact that work on the edition of the *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam* is now at quite an advanced stage, I would prefer to wait for the appropriate place (i.e., the preface to the critical edition) before making any definite statement on its authorship and likewise for the date. In an altogether provisional way, however, I would like to suggest a chronology that spans from the mid 1260s to the mid 1270s. The need for caution is dictated principally by the fact that the work of identifying the implicit sources—wherever possible—is still ongoing and is prolonged by the fact that it requires working with texts upon which it is not possible to conduct hasty research.

### 2.2 The Use of the Fourth Proposition in the *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam*

It is well known that, at least until 1272, the year in which Thomas Aquinas revealed the Proclean *substratum* of the anonymous work in his *Commentary*, the *Liber de causis* was considered a complement to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, if not a work at least partially written by Aristotle himself.\(^43\) It comes as no surprise, therefore, to find it quoted in a text such as the *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam*, in which there are thirteen explicit references to the *Liber de causis*. In most cases, the author does not specify the number of the proposition cited; nevertheless, it is almost always possible to identify it precisely.\(^44\) In the remaining cases, the references to the *Liber* are more precise, and include the number of the proposition. These are quotations from the first and the fourth proposition. In q. 256, the author cites the first proposition and calls it the “first theorem”.\(^45\) In q. 37 and q. 110, it is the fourth proposition that is mentioned but, surprisingly, is not called “fourth,” but “first”:

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43 For the various conjectures on the authorship of the *Liber* formulated in the 13th century, see D’Ancona 1995, p. 195–227, in particular p. 195–197, 215–224. Even after 1272, however, the attribution to Aristotle remained an option in the exegetical tradition of *De causis*, of which Albert’s case is emblematic.

44 For the text of each quotation, see the Appendix 1.

45 Henry of Ghent(?), *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam*, lib. v, q. 256, MS Escorial, h., 11. 1, f. 56\(^{th}\), l. 21–25: *Nihilominus tamen potest esse perfectum perfectione quae decet causato, quoniam impossibile est consistere et non indigere alio, eo quod omne creatum in quantum...*
Praeterea: prima propositione (!) De causis “prima rerum creaturarum est esse” et in commento scribitur ibidem quod alia [quod alia] posteriora se habent per informationem ad ens.46

q. 37

Sed prima omnium sunt ens et unum: “prima—enim—rerum creaturarum est esse” ut habetur prima propositione (!) De causis.47

q. 110

Q. 37 (Utrum ens et verum convertuntur secundum rationem) is the third of seventeen questions that make up the commentary on the second book of Metaphysics in the version that has come down to us. As the title itself states, the quaestio regards the way in which the relation between the convertible (or transcendental) terms ens and verum must be understood. On first glance, it might be supposed that the author of the Quaestiones super Metaphysicam discusses the problem of the transcendents in the commentary upon the second book of the Metaphysics. In fact, the locus classicus for such a discussion would be the fourth book, in which Aristotle treats the relation between “being” and “one”. To explain the commentator’s unusual decision, two things should be kept in mind. First is the structure of the commentary on the second book: the seventeen questions preserved in the Escorial MS are only a part of the original commentary on the second book.48 To be more precise, these questions form the prefatory section of that commentary. Indeed, the author himself states that, before treating the problems raised by Aristotle’s text, many other questions must be addressed on the topic of truth. Secondly, one must remember that the presence of questions dedicated to the theme of truth, which are not directly linked to Aristotle’s text, is not in itself a peculiarity of these Quaestiones. Roger Bacon’s Questiones supra libros prime philosophie Aristotelis and the Questiones altere, of somewhat doubtful attribution to Bacon,49 are both

46 Henry of Ghent(?), Quaestiones super Metaphysicam., lib. II. q. 37, f. 7rb, l. 43–45.
47 Henry of Ghent(?), Quaestiones super Metaphysicam., lib. III, q. 110, f. 13va, l. 15–18.
48 To estimate the extent of the lacuna, one can only have recourse to the enumeration of quaestiones in the margin of the manuscript. The final question on the second book is q. 50. The first question on the third book is q. 98. From this we may assume that 48 questions related to the second book are lost, and that whoever added the marginal numbering of the questions had access to a complete version of the Quaestiones super Metaphysicam.
49 Roger Bacon, Questiones supra libros prime philosophie Aristotelis, lib. II, p. 21–27. I am referring to the first nine questions relative to the second book. Roger Bacon, Questiones
good examples of this, while further examples can be found in some unedited commentaries on the *Metaphysics*. The origins of such a practice, which, to my mind, seem more evident in the commentaries *per modum quaestionis* in virtue of the greater freedom conceded to this literary genre, are still not completely clear. It would not be unusual, however, to find that the first generation of commentaries had drawn upon existing or contemporary doctrinal elaborations of the theme of truth in order to create a proper *accessus* to the second book.

In light of these premises, it is easier to frame q. 37. Here the author discusses the possibility of affirming that “being” and “true” are convertible according to reason, and does so, in my view, with a clear reference to q. 1, a. 1 of Aquinas’ *De veritate*. If “being” cannot be grasped without “true,” since they have the same disposition—as Aristotle states in *Metaphysics* 11, 1, 993b30–31—then the two terms cannot differ *secundum rationem*. On the other hand, given that the expression “true being” does not imply a simple repetition, we must postulate that being and true do differ in reason. And it is in order to support precisely this thesis that the author cites the fourth proposition of the *Liber de causis*—calling it the “first” proposition!—together with the eighteenth:

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50 See, for instance, the first ten questions on the second book of Geoffrey of Aspall’s *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam* I–X (MS Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, cod. 509, 2, f. 56rv–58rv) in Zimmermann 1971, p. 66–67.

51 If such were the case, an in-depth study of the commentaries on book 11 might turn out to be very useful in tracing the interactions between Aristotle’s text—after its entry into the Latin West—and the philosophical tradition within which it was received and which it changed.

52 See Appendix 2.

53 Henry of Ghent(?), *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam*, lib. 11, q. 37, f. 7rb, l. 25–29: Item: quorumcumque est penitus eadem dispositio, non differunt secundum rationem, entis et veri potius una et eadem dispositio est, ergo non differunt secundum rationem. Maior patet quia quaecumque differunt secundum rationem, per diversam rationem habent diversam dispositionem et sic, cum unum et ens habent eandem dispositionem, etc. Maior patet per hoc quod dicit in principio novae Metaphysicae quod “simul est dispositio rei in sua veritate et (in) sua entitate”.

54 Henry of Ghent(?), *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam*, lib. 11, q. 37, f. 7rb, l. 42–43: Oppositum arguitur: si enim verum nullo modo different, dicendo “ens verum” vel contrario erit nugatio. Hoc autem est falsum, ergo different ratione.

55 Here, as well as in the following cases, *first* (prima) is always written out in all letters, not in numbers; and, for this reason, I would exclude that the variation in the numeration (fourth/first) is an error of the copist.
Praeterea: prima (!) propositione De causis: “prima rerum creaturarum est esse” et in commento scribitur ibidem quod alia [quod alia] posteriora se habent per informationem ad ens. Cum ergo “verum” aliquid nomen sit posterius natura nomine “entitatis,” secundum quod vult illa propositione, secundum aliquam informationem (se) habebit verum ad ens. Talia autem secundum rationem differunt, ergo verum et ens differunt secundum rationem.56

If the first among created things is being—as the first (for us, the fourth!) proposition of De causis states—and that which is added to it is by way of information, then this implies that truth is actually, by nature, posterior to being (ens). And the two terms, therefore, must necessarily differ secundum rationem. Due to lack of space, I cannot give a detailed account of the expository strategy used in the solutio, nor its doctrinal originality. I will just refer to the conclusions: “being” (ens) and “true” differ according to reason, but not because “true” actually adds something to “being”. Truth is, in fact, being, but they differ because being (ens) indicates whose act is being (esse), while truth indicates the same reality, but as self-manifesting in the soul.57 In the light of this solution, the author reconsiders the fourth proposition, giving it an interpretation which he claims to be his own: “being” (ens) can be called “first” with respect to “true,” as long as it is considered primus inter pares (even though the equal here is just one, truth). Indeed, truth cannot, by nature, be posterior to being (ens), as the reference to the eighteenth proposition seems to imply. While it is true that “being” is grasped first, it is also true, as Aristotle teaches in book two of the Metaphysics, that things have as much of “true” (verum) as they have of “being” (esse) and that the greatest being (ens) is the greatest truth.58

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56 Henry of Ghent(?), Quaestiones super Metaphysicam, lib. II, q. 37, f. 7vb, l. 43–48.
57 Henry of Ghent(?), Quaestiones super Metaphysicam, lib. II, q. 37, f. 7va–vb, l. 47–4: Per hoc etiam patet principale, scilicet quod verum et ens solum differunt secundum rationem. Dicendum igitur quod verum non aliquid reale addit supra ens; verum ergo est ens [...]. Ergo dicendum [ergo] quod verum et ens non sunt idem secundum rationem, quoniam “ens” significat nomine absoluto illud cuius actus est esse, “verum” autem significat illud idem ut est sui declarativum apud animam: differunt ergo in ratione.
58 Here, in fact, there is a commingling of the Aristotelian text with Averroes’ comment (Aristotle, Metaph. 11, 1, 993b20–35 and Averroes, In Metaph. 11, f. 30r, B–D).
at least relative to the two terms, “being” (\textit{ens}) and “true” (\textit{verum}). And there is, in fact, an important theoretical premise. Defining truth, not in relation to human cognitive ability, but in a self-reflexive manner starting from being itself (truth is being self-manifesting in the soul),\(^{59}\) would allow the use of the same definition, with the necessary differences, both for created being and for God. Regrettably, the text doesn’t offer enough detail for a more in-depth explanation.\(^ {60}\)

Reference to the fourth proposition returns in q. 110 (\textit{Utrum unum et ens debent dici principia omnium}), which is the twelfth question on book three. This time the context is the discussion of the aporias raised by Aristotle in book three, especially the eleventh aporia. The text of the \textit{quaestio} is relatively brief. The only argument in support of the thesis that “being” (\textit{ens}) and “one” (\textit{unum}) should be considered as principles comes from the fourth proposition (again called “first!”):

\begin{quote}
Iuxta hoc quaeritur tertio utrum unum et ens debent dici principia omnium. Et arguitur primo quod sic, quia primum summum principium et causa idem, sed prima omnium sunt ens et unum: “prima enim rerum creatarum est esse,” ut habetur prima (!) propositione \textit{De causis}. Unum ergo et ens debent dici rerum principia.\(^ {61}\)
\end{quote}

There is only one argument \textit{contra}: “being” and “one” cannot be said to be causes and principles of a thing in itself, since the fact that the composition of matter and form is both being and one owes rather to the action of form on matter.\(^ {62}\) In the \textit{solutio} the author clarifies that “being” and “one” do not indicate a common nature actually present in the things of which they are pred-

\(^{59}\) In actual fact, in q. 37 of the \textit{Quaestiones super Metaphysicam} this definition of truth (\textit{sui declarativum apud animam}) coexists with the one given, following Aquinas, in relation to human cognitive ability (q. 37, f. 7r, l. 43–44: \textit{unde “verum” significat ens in quantum est cognitum apud animam, “bonum” in quantum appetitum apud animam}).

\(^{60}\) Henry of Ghent(?), \textit{Quaestiones super Metaphysicam}, lib. 11, q. 37, f. 7v, l. 9–14: \textit{Ad aliquid dicendum quod illa propositione nihil aliquid dicit quam ordinem inter ens et verum, quia ens et verum sub eadem dispositione intelliguntur, ut patet ibi in 11o secundum finem litterae, quia dicit quod illud quod est primum ens (est) maximum ens et illud quod est primum verum est maximum verum. Unde, sicut est in ente, ita in Deo. Nihilominus in alio sensu saepe arguitur de illa propositione.}

\(^{61}\) Henry of Ghent(?), \textit{Quaestiones super Metaphysicam}, lib. 111, q. 113, f. 13r, l. 13–18.

\(^{62}\) Henry of Ghent(?), \textit{Quaestiones super Metaphysicam}, lib. 111, q. 113, f. 13v, l. 18–22: \textit{Opposita arguitur: illud quod sequitur causas et principia rei non est causa aut principium, unum autem et ens sequitur principia et causas rei, quia ex praesentia formae in materia derelinquit entitas et unitas compositi. Ergo unum et ens non debent dici principia et causae rei.}
icated, but only an analogical predication. And it is from this perspective that he reconsiders the fourth proposition:

Quod obicitur primo, quod: “primum tamen et principium idem sunt,” istud verum est loquendo de prioritate reali; quod autem unum et ens dicuntur priora super omnia, non est nisi communitate vocis. Si autem alia prioritas realis sit in ipsis, hoc non est nisi in quantum descendunt ad principia et causas et de ipsis praedicantur. Et hoc modo habet veritatem quod “prima rerum creatarum est esse”: hoc enim modo “esse” dicit eandem naturam cum unaquaque re.

The expository strategy is not so different from what we have already seen. The fourth proposition is initially cited with a polemical undertone, as the bearer of unacceptable doctrinal implications: that “true” is, by nature, posterior to “being” (q. 37), or that “being,” together with “one,” are to be considered as cause and principle of the existent (q. 110). In both cases, however, in the responsio, the fourth proposition of De causis is not simply rejected. Rather, the author distinguishes between an incorrect reading of the fourth proposition (and alludes to its interpretation by others) and a correct and acceptable one, his own. In other words: he reinterprets it in order to make it compatible with his own system of thought. In q. 110, for instance, he clarifies that the being (esse) of the fourth proposition, correctly understood, indicates none other than the essence of each thing. It is in this sense that one should understand his use of the term natura.

63 Henry of Ghent(?), Quaestiones super Metaphysicam, lib. III, q. 110, f. 13vb, l. 13–18: Ad illud quod quaeritur tertio: “utrum unum et ens debent dici causae et principia rerum,” dicendum quod ens et unum nullam naturam communem significant super ea quibus conveniunt, sed solam vocem communem analogam repraesentant quae nihil significa[n]t nisi significatum per aliquod contentorum sub ipsa.

64 Henry of Ghent(?), Quaestiones super Metaphysicam, lib. III, q. 110, f. 13vb, l. 34–41.

65 In q. 124 (Utrum unum et ens convertantur) we find a much clearer definition of what the author means by ens, that is, as the essence or quiddity of a res: nomen enim quod est “ens” significat quidditatem sive essentiam rei absolute, “unum” vero significat idem sub indivisioine quadam sui ipsius in se (Quaestiones super Metaphysicam, lib. III, q. 124, f. 19va).
The Fourth Proposition as the “First” at the Beginning of the Summa

Referring to the fourth proposition of the Book of Causes as the “first” is extremely unusual. I am aware of only one similar case: the first articles of Henry of Ghent’s Summa. Henry introduces this reference at the beginning of the Summa (a.1, q. 2). The theme is whether man can know anything without the aid of divine illumination (Utrum contingat hominem aliquid scire sine divina illustratione). It cannot be denied that, in the absolute sense (ex puris naturalibus) man can know something; indeed, to affirm the contrary would be equal to undermining the dignity of man as a rational being. Nevertheless, one needs to specify what type of knowledge can be acquired in this way. Indeed, it is possible to have a twofold knowledge of every thing: that which a thing is (by a process of simple understanding) and its truth (by a process of composing and dividing). The fact that the intellect, based only on sensible knowledge, can know a thing as it is (res sicut est), without knowing its truth (de ipsa quid sit), has a twofold origin. It depends both on the operation of the intellect, which does not know the truth of a thing by simple understanding but through composition and division, and on the intelligibles in themselves. To this end, he refers to the fourth proposition. Even though being (ens) and true (verum) are simul (which means both together and simultaneous) in every thing, being is the first intention grasped by the intellect:

Ex parte autem intelligibilis ratio est quod alia est intentio rei qua est id qued est et alia qua dicitur quia, licet simul sunt in quacumque re et convertuntur sibi invicem, qua omne ens est verum et e converso. Ut enim dicit prima (!) propositio De causis: “prima rerum creaturarum est esse”. Et ideo prima intentio comprehendibilis per intellectum est ratio entis, quam contingit intelligere absque eo quod ualla alia intentio circa ens intelligatur, quia nullam aliarum includit in se et ipsa in omnibus aliis includitur. [...] Unde quia intentio entis in omnibus alius rerum intentionibus includitur, tam universalibus quam particularibus—quod enim non est ens nihil est—ideo vult Commentator super primam proposi-

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66 On Summa, art. 1, q. 2, see: Aertsen 1996, p. 6–8; Steel 2003, p. 28–31; Porro 2009, p. 201–203; Porro 2014a, p. 66–67.
67 Henry of Ghent, Summa, art. 1, q. 2, p. 34, l. 105–106.
68 Henry of Ghent, Summa, p. 36–37, l. 155–173.
tionem *De causis* “quod esse vehementioris est adhaerentiae cum re quam” aliae intentiones quae sunt in ea.⁶⁹

As already mentioned, in this case Henry refers to the fourth proposition, naming it “first”. And he does so twice: referring to the lemma and secondary propositions (commonly called “commentary” of the *lemmata*).⁷⁰ In both cases, he explicitly says that he is citing the first proposition and the manuscript tradition is unanimous in this regard. Understandably, this fact must have caused no small difficulty to the editor of the text. In the first case, Henry refers unequivocally to the fourth proposition, even though he calls it “first”. For this reason, Gordon Wilson indicates it as the fourth proposition in the *apparatus*.⁷¹ The second case is a bit more complex, since the words that Henry quotes actually find a more literal correspondence in the first proposition:⁷²

Unde quia intentio entis in omnibus aliis rerum intentionibus includitur, tam universalibus quam particularibus [...], ideo vult Commentator super primam propositionem *De causis* “quod esse vehementioris est adhaerentiae cum re quam” aliae intentiones quae sunt in ea.⁷³

Et propter illud fit eius operatio vehementioris adhaerentiae cum re quam operatio causae propinquae.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, the context of these words in the first proposition does not really suit what Henry wants to argue.⁷⁵ The *De causis* describes the action of the first

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⁶⁹ Henry of Ghent, *Summa*, art. 1, q. 2, p. 37–38, l. 174–190.
⁷⁰ The habit of distinguishing within the *Liber de causis* between the text of an Author (i.e. the *lemmata* or principal propositions) and the text of a Commentator (i.e. the secondary propositions, called also commentary) was very common in the Middle Ages. I merely note here that Henry maintains this practice even in his later career. See *Quodlibet XIV*, ed. Badius, f. 578rT: *Cui videtur concordare idem Commentator super primam propositionem De causis dicens sic: “Causa universalis prima agit in causatum secundae antequam in ipsum agat causa universalis secunda quae sequitur ipsum”*.
⁷¹ Henry of Ghent, *Summa*, art. 1, q. 2, p. 37, l. 176–177: *Ut enim dicit prima propositio De causis: “prima rerum creaturarum est esse”*. See Wilson 2005, p. 37, *ap*.
⁷² In effect, in the apparatus to the critical edition, the first proposition is named as the source of Henry’s quotation. See Wilson 2005, p. 38, *ap*.
⁷³ Henry of Ghent, *Summa*, art. 1, q. 2, p. 38, l. 186–190.
⁷⁴ *Liber de causis*, 1, 13, p. 136.
⁷⁵ In the first proposition of the *Liber de causis* there are often expressions in which the adjective *vehemens* or the adverb *vehementer* appear in reference to the action of the first cause in relation to the second. See *Liber de causis*, 1, 9, p. 135: *esse ergo vehementius est
cause in relation to the immediate cause: the former’s action is more powerfully (vehementius) united with the effect than the action of the most immediate cause.  

Henry, instead, is referring to the relation between “being” (ens) and the other intentions. Moreover, if he had wanted to use the first proposition to support his argument, he could have found better passages to that end.  

If, on the other hand, we would like to trust Henry when he says he is referring to the same proposition in both cases, we could find a textual justification for his quotation in the fourth proposition that would be better suited to the contents, even though not so literal:

Quod est quia esse est supra sensum et supra animam et supra intelligentiam, et non est post causam primam latius neque prius creatum ipso. Propter illud ergo factum est superius creatis rebus omnibus et vehemen-
tius unitum.  

It is difficult to imagine that, in the space of few lines, Henry deliberately uses the same numeration for two different propositions (that is, the fourth and the first), above all because, as we have just seen, when he cites the commentary on the ‘first proposition’, in view of the content of his citation, it seems much more likely that he refers instead to the fourth proposition. It seems more plausible to me that, as Henry himself says, he is referring always to the same proposition, and that the one he calls “first,” in both cases, is actually the fourth.

It remains to be clarified, from a doctrinal point of view, how Henry could find in the secondary propositions of the fourth chapter a description of the relation between “being” and the other intentions. Here it might be useful to reconsider the text of q. 7 of Quodlibet X, in which, almost a decade later, Henry offers a more detailed explanation of how the text of the fourth proposition

Liber de causis, I, 12, p. 136: Iam igitur manifestum est et planum quod causa prima longinquaque et vehemensius causa rei quam causa propinquaque; [...]

Liber de causis, I, 16, p. 136: Iam igitur manifestum est et planum quod causa prima longinquane et vehemensius causa rei quam causa propinquaque;

Liber de causis, II, 16–17, p. 137: Non igitur manifestum est et planum quod causa prima longinquane et vehemensius causa rei quam causa propinquaque;

I'm referring to Liber de causis, I, 6–9, p. 135: Et nos quidem exemplificamus illud per esse et vivum et hominem. Quod est quia aportet ut sit res esse in primis, deinde vivum, postea homo. Vivum ergo est causa hominis propinquaque; et esse, causa eius longinquae. Esse ergo vehemensius est causa homini quam vivum [...].
should be read as a whole. Beforehand, however, we should recall that there is at least one other case—article 24, question 9—in which Henry refers to the first proposition in such a way as to suggest that he actually has in mind the fourth.\footnote{As is well known, a sizeable part of the Summa and Quodlibeta can still only be read in Badius’ edition, so I’ve had to look at the quotations from De causis line by line. I don’t exclude, therefore, that something may have escaped me, in which case I would be very grateful if anyone has anything to convey in this regard.} The theme is whether man, in knowing other things through divine quiddity, can distinguish the latter from the former things (Utrum homo cognoscendo alia per id quod Deus est discernat illud ab alius).\footnote{On art. 24, q. 9, see at least: Laarmann 1999, p. 304–311; Pickavé 2011, p. 159–166.} As a matter of fact, the divine essence is effectively that which the intellect grasps first, and it is the foundation for understanding all the rest. Nevertheless, at this first level of knowledge, it is not perceived as really distinct from the essence of creatures. Indeed, only its most general attributes are grasped, in such a way that can befit both creator and creature. Recourse to the Liber de causis serves Henry as a way to recap and even reinforce what he had already claimed in the previous question. God’s quiddity is the first concept grasped by the intellect, and thus it represents the basis for knowing all the other concepts under the notion of being (\textit{ens}). Indeed, “being” (\textit{esse}) is that which is grasped first in every created being (\textit{ens}) and is the basis for understanding all the other intentions, as we read in the commentary on the first proposition of \textit{De causis}:

\begin{verbatim}
hoc modo concessimus in quaestione praecedenti quod cognitio eius quod quid est de Deo est ratio cognoscendi quod quid est in omni creatura, ex hoc, videlicet, quod quid est Deus primum conceptum est in generalibus et primis conceptibus entis, qui quidem primi conceptus generalium atque universalium intentionum entis sunt primo cognita, et per hoc ratio cognoscendi omnes alios conceptus sub ente in quacumque re. Esse enim est primo cognitum et conceptum in quolibet ente, et est ratio concipiendi quamlibet aliam intentionem rei sub esse, ut dicitur in Commento primae propositionis De causis.\footnote{Henry of Ghent, \textit{Summa}, art. 24, q. 9, f. 146vX. I’m following the punctuation of the Latin text used in Decorte, Teske 2005, p. 268.}
\end{verbatim}

Despite some striking differences,\footnote{To name just one, in q. 2, article 1, there is no mention of the fact that the \textit{esse} first grasped by the intellect, albeit in an indistinct way, is the divine quiddity.} this reference to the first proposition of \textit{De causis} closely recalls what Henry had already done in q. 2 of article 1. In this case, however, it is even more difficult to imagine that Henry actually intends
the first and not the fourth proposition. Clearly the idea that “being” (esse) is what the intellect grasps first is linked to the fourth proposition, which should not have been mentioned at all if we assume that Henry was actually referring to the first proposition here. In any case, we need to clarify, as far as possible, in which proposition of the Liber de causis Henry thought he found a description of the relation between ens (or esse) and the other intentions. Here, as mentioned before, the text of q. 7 of Quodlibet X throws some light on the matter; in it, Henry introduces the fourth proposition of De causis (calling it “fourth”) in an open polemic with Giles of Rome. If, indeed, one conceded what Giles says, that being (esse) and essence are really distinct, created simultaneously, and that essence is almost even the subject (subiectum) in which being (esse), as form, is received, then one would have to admit that essence comes before being (esse), whether by nature or in terms of duration. And so the assumption of the fourth proposition of De causis—in which being is the first of all created things—would be proven wrong, even though Henry concedes it should be accepted (quod tamen oportet ponere).83 In the solutio Henry dedicates ample space to expounding his interpretation of the fourth proposition. I will not enter into detail over all the nuances of his argumentation, nor the consequences he draws in favour of his thesis on the intentional distinction between being (esse) and essence, since Pasquale Porro has already astutely done so in his work.84

I shall only pause over two aspects that concern the object of my investigation. Henry repeats here the paradigm of intentional analysis we have already encountered in a. 1, q. 2 and in a. 24, q. 9, but he does so in a broader and more precise way. In every thing there are different intentions, but all are drawn from being (esse) in some way. In being, which is the only true product of God’s creative act, every process of resolution (resolutio) of the intellect terminates. The being (esse) in question is, according to Albert the Great,85 a simple concept of the mind, the most indeterminate, which does not presuppose anything prior to itself and which, therefore, can only be informed and determined by

83 Henry of Ghent, Quodlibet X, q. 7, p. 154, l. 13–21: Nec potest dicere quod habet esse ut per formam sibi impressam per creationem, sicut gratia imprimitur animae, ut duo sint simul creatae, scilicet essentia et esse, quia cum secundum hoc essentia creatur ut subiectum, esse vero ut forma in subiecto, et forma in subiecto existens necessario praeasupponit natura vel duratione subiectum. Prius ergo natura esset essentia creatae quam esse, etsi simul duratione, et sic non esset verum quod prima rerum creatarum est esse, quod tamen oportet ponere, ut infra declarabitur.

84 See Porro 2014a, especially p. 70–71.

85 The reference to Albert’s De causis is clear, even though Henry does not mention it explicitly. See Porro 2014a, p. 80.
that which can be drawn from being itself. What Henry means when he speaks of that which can be drawn from the first created being becomes clear if we recall that he is speaking of the relation between “being” (esse) and the other intentions. Moreover, as he himself explains soon after, in the comment on the fourth proposition we read that, just as a multiplicity of individuals in the sublunar world derives from one specific form that splits and diversifies, so an infinity of intelligible forms derives from the first created being. Such forms, as Henry specifies, continuing to paraphrase the text of the fourth proposition, are not really distinct from the being by which they are deduced: their relation can instead be described as a unity that gathers up a multiplicity, and a multiplicity in unity. In order to be even more explicit, Henry adds that “being” (esse) and “being something” (the first created in that it is determined and informed by the intelligible forms that derive from its diversification) do not differ secundum rem. It seems clear, therefore, that Henry finds in the fourth proposition a textual basis—or a pretext, if one prefers—for developing his intentional analysis. The term ‘intentional’ is obviously absent altogether from De causis; it is part of Henry’s technical vocabulary. Yet it is exactly in this way that, according to Henry, one needs to interpret the words in the comment on the fourth proposition, in which we read that from the first created being derives a multiplicity

86 Henry of Ghent, Quodlibet, X, q. 7, p. 171–172, l. 12–31: Sed sicut in eodem prius natura est esse quam esse aliquid, et prius existere quam existere aliquid, sic prius creatur esse ut existat quam esse aliquid ut existat aliquid, secundum illam quartam propositionem libri De Causis: “Prima rerum creatarum est esse, et non est ipsum creatum alium,” creatione scilicet, qua producitur esse in existentia. Cum enim in eodem secundum rem sint plures intentiones, scilicet esse, vivere, sentire, intelligere et aliae huiusmodi, esse ante se nullam aliam supponit et est propinquius esse primo puro et vero secundum naturam et intellectum. Si enim fiat resolutio compositi ex pluribus intentionibus, semper stabit resolutio in esse, et ideo est primum in omnibus quae procedunt a primo, et proprie causae primae effectus per creationis actum et nihil aliud in re. Esse enim in re est primus est simplex mentis conceptus ad nihil formatus vel determinatus, nec formativus nec determinativus alicuius alterius, quia nihil ipsum praecedet, sed formabilis et in quo incipit informabilitas per ea quae educuntur ab ipso. Ut enim dicitur in commento praedicatae propositionis: “Sicut ex una forma specifica, propter hoc quod diversificatur in mundo inferiori, veniunt infinita individua, simuliter ex esse creato primo, propterea quod diversificatur, apparent formae intelligibiles infinitae.” Nec seiuunguntur ab invicem sicut est seiunctio individuum, quoniam sunt unum habens multitudinem et multitudo in unitate.

87 Henry of Ghent, Quodlibet, X, q. 7, p. 172–173, l. 40–47: Nihil ergo sequuntium proprie fit per creationem, sed potius per informationem, et solum ipsum esse fit proprie per creationem, ut actus primus simplex a causa prima in actu existendi productus, ut potius esse dicatur causa-tum a primo quam ens et esse aliquid creatum in existentia, tamquam illud quod “est causa prima formalis entis vehementius illi unita,” ut dicitur in commento dictae propositionis, et “plus formaliter influes intelli,” ut dicitur prima propositio De causis.
CITING THE BOOK OF CAUSES, IV

of forms, which are not really distinct from it. The purpose of his analysis, evidently, is to prove that being (esse) and essence differ only as two intentions. As far as the focus of the present paper is concerned, this passage in q. 7 of Quodlibet X clearly shows, to my mind, that Henry finds in the fourth proposition a model for what he calls an intentional distinction; and so, both in the case of a. 1, q. 2 and a. 24, q. 9, when he speaks of the relation between ens (or esse) and the other intentions, he is referring to the fourth proposition, even though he calls it “first”.

The text of q. 7 of Quodlibet X allows us to clarify another detail. Continuing his discourse, Henry reiterates that only esse is properly created, and it is thereby more entitled to be caused by the first cause than ens or the being of something existing. Indeed, esse, as the comment on the fourth proposition states, is the first formal cause of ens, which is united to it with greater vehemence.88 So we may conclude that even in q. 2 of article 1, when Henry writes that esse has a more vehement adherence to res than the other intentions, even though he uses words borrowed from prop. 1, he is actually referring to the fourth proposition.

To sum up the facts so far: in the early years of his activity as magister, Henry cites three times the fourth proposition as the “first”: in q. 2 of article 1 of the Summa (before 1276), and in q. 9 of article 24 (completed before Christmas 1277).89 In these same years, however, in q. 3 of article 9, Henry cites once the first proposition and calls it “first”.90 The other references to the fourth proposition, as far as I know, belong to the more mature period of Henry’s career. They are to be found in q. 7 of Quodlibet X, in q. 3 of Quodlibet XI and in q. 1 of Quodlibet XIV. These are the years between 1286 and 1290, and in these cases, Henry always refers to the fourth proposition as the fourth.

88 It should be specified that the words quoted by Henry (est causa prima formalis entis vehementius illi unita, ut dicitur in commento dictae propositionis) do not find an exact literal equivalent in the text of De causis. Nevertheless, I believe it is more appropriate to follow Henry’s “bibliographical” indications, which link this quotation to the commentary on the proposition quoted previously—which is precisely the fourth—unlike the modern editor’s indication, which instead identifies the source as the first proposition (see Macken, p. 172, ap.). The passage under discussion can be found in the previous footnote.

89 I refer, in both cases, to the dating proposed by Gomez-Caffarena (see Gomez-Caffarena 1958, p. 270).

90 Henry of Ghent, Summa, a. 9, q. 3, f. 72rV: Et ideo primum dicit esse magis agens et principalis, secundum quod dicit prima propositio De causis: “Omnis causa primaria plus influit in effectum quam causa secundaria”.

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4 Why the “First”? Tools for an Analysis

4.1 The “Fourth” as the “First” in the Quaestiones super Metaphysicam

In the present state of my research, I could not identify any other medieval text, apart from the Quaestiones super Metaphysicam of Ms. Escorial, h. II. 1 and Henry’s Summa, in which the fourth proposition is called “first”. In both cases, unfortunately, there is not any explicit reason for this. In order to provide a plausible explanation, I will examine the available information.

Regarding the Quaestiones super Metaphysicam, one can exclude, from the outset, that the “first” in place of “fourth” depends on an error by a copist. In fact, “first” is written out in letters, not as a number. Next we need to ascertain whether such an anomaly can be adequately explained by speculating that the author had in front of him a manuscript of the Liber de causis with a numeration different from the usual one. In this specific case, it would have been a manuscript in which both the first and the fourth propositions were called “first”. In the Quaestiones super Metaphysicam the first proposition is called primo theorema, while the fourth proposition is called prima propositio.91 So the model should have had the following divisio textus: the first three propositions would be considered a preamble, while the fourth, now the first, would signal the beginning of the treatise. At present we know of no manuscript with these characteristics. This, in itself, is not a sufficient reason simply to exclude the hypothesis of an anomaly in the model, as there is still much unedited material related to the tradition of the Liber de causis. And, in any case, we could always postulate the existence of a manuscript that matches the profile described above and is now lost. Nevertheless, there are a few elements that lead me to have some reservations about this hypothesis.

For one, the author of the Quaestiones is always very careful about the aspects that today would be called ‘philological’ in a broad sense. To give just one example: he is always very precise in noting when he uses a translation of the Metaphysics or Posterior Analytics which is different from the one he has already cited. Had he had access to a manuscript that carried a different

91 The fact that he uses the term theorema for the first proposition, and propositio for the fourth, is not in itself significant. We cannot conjecture that the author used the two different terms in order to postulate a different hierarchy between the two propositions, “theorem” indicating, for example, the preamble to the Liber, and “proposition” indicating the actual commencement of the text itself. The author indeed refers once to the lemma of proposition XVII (XVII) as “theorem”. Moreover, from an initial study of the occurrence of the terms theorema and propositio in some 13th-century commentaries on the Liber de causis, it does not seem that the two terms have been given different meanings. In some cases, in fact, they seem to be used interchangeably, in other cases, just one or the other.
numeration for one of the most famous propositions of the *Liber de causis*, he would have mentioned it. Clearly, this implies that the author must have known the *Liber de causis* well enough to notice the difference between the numeration in his manuscript and the so-called standard numeration. In effect, it is difficult to imagine that he did not know that the often quoted proposition beginning with “prima rerum creatarum est esse” was generally known as the fourth. And the fact that he himself presents his interpretation of the fourth proposition as different from the more widespread one suggests that he had a certain familiarity with the exegetical tradition, as revealed by an implicit reference to pseudo-Henry’s *Quaestiones in Librum de causis*.92 I would also tend to exclude that the author of the *Quaestiones* envisaged presenting his own *divisio textus* of the *Liber de causis*. Such a choice would have required at least a brief explanation, of which no trace can be found in the text of the *Quaestiones*.93

There is still another argument: in the *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam* there are thirteen quotations from the *Liber de causis*; however, the only cases in which the author quotes a proposition and indicates its number are the first (as *primo theorema*), and the fourth (as *prima propositio*). Even when the other propositions are reported in an almost literal way, they are introduced with more generic forms, like “ut habetur in De causis” or “in illo theoremate”.94 Therefore, there are no elements that can confirm a different *divisio textus* comprising a variation of three units in the numbering of propositions. The *sole* anomaly in the text concerns the way in which the fourth proposition is cited.

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92 In q. 1 (⟨*An contingat scire*⟩) the author of the *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam* discusses a gnoseological doctrine which fits in well the one presented by pseudo-Henry in his *Quaestiones in Librum de causis*, especially in q. 51 (⟨*De quo (theoremate) primo quaeritur utrum anima habeat de se exemplaria rerum sensibilium innata vel acquisita⟩). Two elements, in particular, considered together, enable us to identify the *Quaestiones in Librum de causis* as the source summarised and discussed by the author of the *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam*. 1. The reference to the *exemplaria concreata*: it is a rather uncommon expression (almost absent in the database) which is extensively present in pseudo-Henry’s *Quaestiones in Librum de causis*. Cristina D’Ancona has already noted that the expression *exemplaria concreata* is present as well in the *Scriptum super Librum de causis* by pseudo-Adam (see D’Ancona 1995, p. 209–211). Nevertheless, from a preliminary research I undertook, I can exclude that pseudo-Adam’s *Scriptum super Librum de causis* was the source for the *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam*. 2. A very peculiar adaptation of verses from Boethius’s *Consolatio philosophiae*. See Appendix 3 for the selected quotations.

93 It does not make much sense to wonder whether the author was more forthcoming with the details in one of the lost sections. The q. 37 (in which the fourth proposition is called “first” for the first time) precedes the *lacuna* in the second book.

94 See Appendix 1.
My hypothesis is that this “first” in reference to the fourth proposition of the *Liber de causis* does not indicate the number of the proposition, but rather has an evaluative connotation. When referring to the first proposition, “first” would indicate the number of the proposition. When referring to the fourth, on the other hand, it would allude, in an almost emphatic sense, to its importance.

It remains to clarify why the author would have wanted to draw attention to the fourth proposition in this way. The fact that it is introduced at the beginning of the *Quaestiones* with some reservation and with a slightly polemical tone leads me to exclude that the author of the *Quaestiones* intended *personally* to attribute a special value to the fourth proposition. I believe, instead, that he wanted to make a point with that “first,” namely that, among the other propositions in the *Liber de causis*, the fourth was given more attention in the contemporary debate. It is indeed well known that the fourth proposition was one of the most quoted of the *De causis*. Moreover, as Pasquale Porro’s work has evinced, it was also one of the most problematic from an interpretative point of view.

Now, in order to understand better what the author of the *Quaestiones* was referring to, we could perhaps rely on one of his observations, in which he proposes his interpretation of the fourth proposition by distancing himself from what he calls a more common one. Given the points he stresses, it seems clear that his target does not concern the alternative between a hypostatic and a noetic interpretation, which is already typical of the first generation of commentaries on *De causis*, as Porro has shown. He moves along a different trajectory, which offers an interesting glimpse onto another important use of the fourth proposition in the 13th century. If we look outside the tradition of commentaries on the *Liber de causis*, one of the contexts in which it is

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95 See above p. 221, n. 60.

96 See the works by P. Porro discussed above, from which I borrow the expressions “hypostatic” and “noetic” interpretation. There are no elements that allow us to specify how the author of the *Quaestiones* interpreted the intelligentia of which the comment on the fourth proposition speaks. In q. 256 he quotes some words (see Appendix) but without offering any elements that tell us whether he has understood intelligentia in a hypostatic (hence, in a conciliatory position, following pseudo-Henry) or noetic sense (and therefore closer to Albert’s position). Nevertheless, the very absence of a discussion, like the absence of any mention of concreatio (which is the keystone in pseudo-Henry’s interpretative strategy of the fourth proposition) would suggest an interpretative solution closer to the one proposed by Albert in his *De causis*.

97 Even though it is present in the comments datable to after Aquinas (clearly I am only referring to the edited ones). See, for instance: q. 21 (*Utrum bonum sit prīum et communius ente vel e converso*) of Siger’s *Quaestiones super Librum de causis* (Marlasca 1972, p. 89–91); q. 21 (*Utrum esse sit prīnum creatum*) of the *Questiones super Librum de cau-
used the most, after the mid 13th century, is in the dispute over transcendentals. Especially in Albert, who cites it constantly throughout his written production, the fourth proposition seems to have been a favourite authority in establishing the priority of “being” (∗∗ens∗∗) over the other transcendentals. There is a similar trajectory in Aquinas, who cites it frequently throughout his career, albeit in a less convinced way than Albert.98 Perhaps it is in just such a direction that we could look for a hint as to why the fourth proposition is called “first” in the Quaestiones.99

4.2 The Fourth as the “first” in Henry’s Summa

Coming back to Henry, we find a situation not so different from the one just described for the Quaestiones super Metaphysicam. At the beginning of the Summa (a.1, q. 2; a. 24, q. 9) Henry simply calls the fourth proposition prima, and does not bother justifying this practice. Roughly in the same years, he calls the first proposition “first” as well.100 So, again, we must proceed by conjecture.

The variant “first” in reference to the fourth proposition is unanimously reported by the manuscripts containing articles 1–5 of the Summa.101 This is very significant when we take into account the particular genesis of the manuscript tradition of Henry’s Summa. Research conducted for the editorial project of Henry’s Opera omnia has brought to light three fundamental aspects.102 (1.) Henry was not in a hurry to ‘publish’. On the contrary, he continu-
ally revised his work. Only in the last years of his career, between 1289 and 1291, would he give a copy of the *Summa* to the stationer's in Paris for publication as exemplary pieces. (2.) Sections of the *Summa* were available in academic circles before its official publication. For articles 1–26 we can surmise an ‘unofficial’ circulation between the end of the 1270s and the beginning of the 1280s. (3.) We are often able to trace the different phases of Henry’s own editorial work, thanks in part to the invaluable testimony of manuscripts belonging to Godfrey of Fontaines.\(^\text{103}\)

This allows us to exclude the hypothesis that *prima* in reference to the fourth proposition is the result of an error by a copist, and even less so that it is the result of an oversight by Henry. Indeed, Henry had written articles 1–21 before 1276, and only around 1289 did he leave their ‘final’ version at the stationer’s. If he had wanted to, he would have had all the time necessary to make any corrections, and to change that “first” to “fourth”. But he did not.\(^\text{104}\)

So we find ourselves faced with a conscious choice on Henry’s part. And now we need to understand why. We could conjecture that, at the beginning of his career, he used a manuscript of the *Liber de causis* with a *divisio textus* that was different from the usual one; that is, one in which the first three propositions were considered as a preamble, and the fourth as the beginning of the treatise proper. Reviewing Henry’s quotations from the *Liber de causis* in his work prior to the late 1280s, however, there is no trace of a sliding by three units which would have involved all the propositions after the fourth. The most likely hypothesis is that there is an underlying doctrinal reason behind this uncommon reference to the *Book of Causes*. In this sense, “first” would not refer to the number of the proposition, but would somehow allude to its importance. Yet, there are no sufficient elements to maintain that, in a. 1, q. 2 and a. 24, q. 9 (both written before Christmas 1277) Henry intended to attribute *personally* a particular value to the fourth proposition. As Pasquale Porro has justly noted, in the mature period of his career (from 1286 onwards) Henry would find a crucial support in the fourth proposition for the intentional distinction between being and essence. Nevertheless, I would be rather cautious in using this fact in a retrospective manner in order to claim, as the later developments of his thought demonstrate, that the young Henry already gave such a special value

\(^{103}\) See Aiello, Wielockx 2008, in particular p. 154–156.

\(^{104}\) The volumes of the *Summa* already edited in the *Opera omnia* have confirmed that Henry often went back to his texts to modify or correct even the smallest details. The critical edition of articles 1–5 clearly shows this too. Among the many examples given by Gordon Wilson in the preface, I shall cite only one: over the years Henry returned several times to a quotation by Avicenna in order to make it clearer. (see Wilson 2005, p. LVIII).
to the fourth proposition within his system of thought, as to call it “first”. If this were the case, we would expect to see it quoted, for instance, in q. 1 of *Quodlibet I*, as the first text in which Henry tackles the problem of the distinction between being and essence. But that is not the case.

There is another fact, however, that might help us understand, at least partially, why Henry waited so many years before using the fourth proposition in the debate on being and essence, and why he introduces it in q. 7 of *Quodlibet X* with an expression that implies an antecedent. I am referring especially to the concessive tone of that *quod tamen oportet ponere*, which one would not expect from someone who is introducing an *auctoritas* central to his discourse, unless of course it is to suggest an implicit framework.105

From the preliminary research I have undertaken, it could be inferred that the fourth proposition of the *Liber de causis* did not make its entrance in the dispute on the distinction between being and essence with Henry;106 and that Henry, therefore, was not acting on neutral ground. A significant trace is already to be found in Siger’s *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*. In three of the four extant *reportationes* (which may be dated between 1271/72 and 1275/76),107 Siger discusses the distinction between being and essence.108 In the Munich *reportatio*, in particular, Siger names Albert explicitly (and his *De causis et processu universitatis*), along with Avicenna, among the supporters of the real distinction. Albert’s thesis, as reported by Siger, may be summed up as follows: since every thing receives being (*esse*) from its first principle, that is, from God, while it has essence from itself, this implies that being (*esse*) is added to essence in reality.109

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105 Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet X*, q. 7, p. 154, l. 17–21 (see above, n. 83).
106 I shall confine myself here to providing only some examples of texts in which the *Liber de causis* and/or the fourth proposition are expressly named, leaving aside those which contain implicit references or citations.
107 See Dunphy 1981, p. 20–25; Maurer 1983, p. 14–15.
108 Respectively: q. 7 (*Utrum esse in causatis pertineat ad essentiam causatorum*), *introduction*, in the Munich *Reportatio*; q. 7 (*Utrum esse sit additum essentiae entium causatorum*), *introduction*, in the Cambridge *Reportatio*; q. 2 (*De distinctione inter esse et essentiam*), *introduction*, in the Paris *Reportatio*.
109 Siger of Brabant, *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam* (rep. de Munich), *Introduction*, q. 7, p. 43–44, l. 81–87: *Aliquiem dicunt quod res est per dispositionem additum essentiae suae, ita quod secundum ipsos res et ens non sunt eiusdem intentionis, ita quod esse est aliud additum essentiae. Haece est opinio Alberti Commentatoris. Ratio sua est ista Librum de causis, quia res habet esse ex suo Primo Principio; ipsum autem Primum est illud quod ex seipso est, et illud quod ex seipso est habens esse, et est illud quod est ex se; etiam essentia est ex se; quare res distinguitur ab esse. In the Cambridge reportatio the argument is repeated citing Albert, but without specifying any particular work, while in the Paris reportatio there is the same*
For the purposes of my analysis it matters little to what extent Siger understood, or misunderstood, Albert’s true intentions. It is more important, instead, to underline that Siger believed one could find in Albert’s *De causis* a support in favour of the real distinction between being and essence, especially in the idea that only being (*esse*)— unlike essence—is the direct product of the first cause. And, as is well known, that being (*esse*) is the first and direct result of the divine creative act, is exactly what we read in the fourth proposition. So, while not explicitly quoted, it nevertheless seems to me to underlie Siger’s discussion.

In a way that is not so different, the fourth proposition is cited by Giles of Rome, too, in the *Reportatio* of the commentary on the third book of the *Sentences* (c. 1270–1271). In this case, the discussion revolves around whether we can affirm that Christ is a creature, and the fourth proposition is quoted to support the idea that creation, relative to man, does not regard essence, but being (*esse*). Giles cites it once again in the *Ordinatio* of the commentary on the first book of the *Sentences*, which, according to Concetta Luna, can be dated to around 1272–1273. This time the context is whether one can distinguish in God between his being and his essence (*Utrum in deo sit compositio essentiae et esse*). Giles states that some have thought to find, in the fourth proposition of the *Liber de causis*, a suitable foundation to demonstrate that God coincides with His own being; and so, as a consequence, does not admit of any form of composition in Himself. Giles’ criticism of his interlocutors is two-argument without citing either Albert or *De causis*. See: Siger of Brabant, *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam* (rep. de Cambridge), q. 7, p. 32, l. 67–76 and Id., *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam* (rep. de Paris), q. 2, p. 398, l. 37–41.

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110 For the problematic dating of Giles’ *Reportatio* see Luna 2003, p. 16–24.
111 Giles of Rome, *Reportatio III*, q. 25 (dist. 11), p. 422, l. 34–43: *Creari est praedicatum quod conventit homini non ratione quidditatis sue, sed ratione sui esse. Prima rerum creatarum est esse. Non enim cadit creari in ratione hominis quae exprimit quidditatem hominis, sed conventit subposito secundum suum esse simpliciter; et ideo conventit ei ratione nature que dat esse simpliciter et constituit subpositum. Et quia divinum subpositum non constituitur in esse per humanum naturam, sed per divinam, ideo creari, quod dict esse simpliciter incipere, non predicatur de Christo, quia non conventit ei nisi ratione humane nature, per quam non constituitur in esse simpliciter. Et ideo hec est falsa: “Christus est factus aut creatus aut creatura”*. 
112 Luna 2003, p. 21, n. 34.
113 Giles of Rome, *Ordinatio I*, dist. VII, pars II, q. 1, a. 2, f. 181b–182a: *Respondeo, quod quidam sic probant esse Dei non facere compositionem in Deo, quia quando aliquid effectus conventit pluribus causis, oportet illum appropriari uni causae [...]*. Cum igitur videamus omnes causas communicare in dare esse, diversificari autem secundum diversa esse, quia quaedam dant sui causatis esse hominem, quaedam esse leonem, et sic de aliis. Igitur oportet aliquam causam esse, cuius sit proprium causare esse, et ista causa est causa Prima, quia oportet primum causatum esse a causa Prima. Et, e contrario, huic sententiae videtur concordare Auctor De causis, qui in quarta propositione illius libri ait: “Quod prima rerum creatarum est esse,
fold. On a structural level, he laments the partiality of the results obtained: proving that being is appropriate to God first and foremost, since He is the first cause of created being, is not enough to demonstrate that there is no composition in God between being and essence. With regard to the use of the fourth proposition of the *Liber de causis*, Giles shows that its original meaning has been misunderstood. Indeed, while the text of the fourth proposition can lend itself to his adversaries' interpretation (if being is the first effect of divine causality, then God Himself is being), as Giles concedes, nevertheless it should be read from the perspective of the Platonic context whence it comes; thus, it would allow us at least to say that God is above-being, and not being.

These texts provide only a few examples of the use of the fourth proposition in the debate on being and essence prior to q. 7 of Henry's *Quodlibet X*. I do not intend to claim, however, that these examples have a direct link with Henry, but rather to suggest a hypothesis. If Henry waited until 1286 to use the fourth proposition to support his thesis on intentional distinction, it is also because it had already been used in that debate, but in a different direction. And, as far as we are concerned, this helps exclude the possibility that, at the beginning of his career, Henry called it “first” because it had a central role in his thought.

Why then did he call it “first”? If one looks at the relevant contexts (*Summa*, a. 1, q. 2 and a. 24, q. 9), one can say that: (1) Henry is speaking about first intentions (that is, the transcendentals); (2) he is using the fourth proposition in order to claim that *ens* (or *esse*) is the first intention grasped by the intellect. If

> *et non est ante ipsum creatum alius*. *Quia igitur esse est primum causatum, Dei est dare esse tanquam primae causae, et quia proprium est Deo dare esse, erit ipsum esse. Sed iste modus dupliciter videtur deficere. Primo, in modo investigationis, secundo in propositione supra quam se appodiat.*

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114 At present I am unable to identify to whom Giles is referring.

115 Giles of Rome, *Ordinatio I*, dist. VIII, pars II, q. 1, a. 2, f. 282a–b: *Rursus illa propositio, supra quam se appodiant sic dicentes, licet posset trahi ad dictum intellectum, considerando tamen illius propositionis principium originale, non est pro eis quod dicitur, sed contra eos. Nam Liber de causis, ubi illa propositio scribitur, extractus fuit ex libro Procli, qui fuit discipulus Platonis. Plato autem posuit ordinem deorum secundum ordinem abstractorum, ita quod omnes dixi dependebant a primo Deo tanquam participantes ipso. Ordo autem abstractorum hic erat: nam ens non dicebatur de omnibus, quia materia prima et ea quae sunt penitus in potentia non sunt entia. Sed unum et bonum dicebatur de omnibus, ita quod essentia unitatis et bonitatis erat Deus primus, et quia post bonum et unum non est aliud adeo com- mune sicut ens, ipsum esse erat primum non simpliciter, sed in genere creatorum. Et ideo cum dixisset: “Prima res creatorum est esse—subdit—et non est ante ipsum creatum alius”—ideo in commento dicitur quod “post causam primam non est latius, neque prius creatum ipso”. Istam viam sectando Deus non est esse, nec est proprium ei esse, sed est super esse. Sed quia intentio nostra est loqui de esse quod est in Deo, et est ipse Deus, auctoritas non est ad propositum.*

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we only had these texts by Henry, our analysis should have stopped here. However, if we also take the *Quaestiones* into consideration, then we can take another step forward. There, especially in q. 37, the author alludes to the fact that: (1) the fourth proposition was quite frequently used in the contemporary theories of the transcendentals; (2) its interpretation was not univocal. Given that Henry calls the fourth proposition “first” in a context about first intentions, I would suggest, for him too, the same explanation proposed for the *Quaestiones*. Namely, that this “first” alludes somehow to the role played by the fourth proposition of the *Liber de causis* in the contemporary doctrines of the transcendentals.

5 Conclusion

At a certain period in its history, the fourth proposition of the *Liber de causis* was called “first,” as attested by the *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam* of MS Escorial, h. II. 1, and by the opening articles of Henry of Ghent’s *Summa*. In the present state of research, these are the only texts carrying this exceptional usage. Moreover, the texts share a certain number of similarities in the manner in which they refer to the fourth proposition. It is cited in order to support the notion that *ens* (or *esse*) is first grasped by the intellect, yet without implying a real anteriority (and hence a real addition) with respect to the other transcendentals. In the *Quaestiones* the author speaks of a difference *secundum rationem*, and in the *Summa* there is mention of an intentional distinction. Two further important affinities concern the accent placed on the quasi-contemporaneity between “true” and “being,” and the essentialist, rather than existentialist, conception of being.\footnote{In this regard the author of the *Quaestiones* expresses himself with clarity (see above n. 67). In q. 2, art. 1 of the *Summa* Henry is not so explicit, whereas in q. 9, art. 24 the quiddative connotation of *esse primum cognitum* is clear. Nevertheless, as Aertsen has rightly pointed out (see Aertsen 1996, p. 15–17), even in the case of q. 2, art. 1, Henry intends *ens* in a quiddative, and not existential, sense.}

There is also a degree of convergence over a possible explanation of that “first” in reference to the fourth proposition. According to the elements so far available, we can exclude, both for the *Quaestiones* and the *Summa*: (a) an error of the manuscript tradition, (b) an oversight by the authors (c) a model known to both authors, yet lost to us, bearing a peculiar *divisio textus*. More likely, the reason for this uncommon reference is a doctrinal motivation, even though I would tend to exclude that either the Author of the *Quaestiones* or the young
Henry called it “first” in order to indicate they were personally attributing a particular value to it. Nor can we interpret retrospectively the importance of the fourth proposition for the late Henry (from 1286 onwards), when he would use it in support of the intentional distinction between being (esse) and essence. Indeed, the passages in the Summa in which it is called “first” (before Christmas 1277) and Quodlibet X (1286) are divided by a wide temporal span, during which time Henry no longer explicitly quotes the fourth proposition of the Liber de causis, or so it seems. The silence may be explained in part by asserting that the fourth proposition entered the debate on being and essence well before q. 7 of Quodlibet X, and was used in quite a different sense from the one assigned to it later by Henry. To my mind, the most probable hypothesis, at present, is that “first” refers to the important role the fourth proposition played in the debate on transcendentals in the second half of the 13th century. This is, in point of fact, the context in which both the author of the Quaestiones and the young Henry call it the “first” proposition. And, as far as I can tell from my research, besides the commentaries on the Liber de causis, this debate is actually one of the main contexts in which it is quoted more frequently in the third quarter of the 13th century. Starting with Albert, the fourth proposition began to have a very important role, with implications in part still unexplored, in establishing both the priority of being over the other transcendentals and the nature of their reciprocal relation.

A final reflection concerns the relationship between the author of the Quaestiones and Henry. That they were the only ones, as far as we know, who called the fourth proposition the “first” should clearly be numbered among the facts that go to make the attribution of the Quaestiones super Metaphysicam to Henry more plausible (and likewise the affinities between the ways in which it was utilised). Worth noting is the fact that neither implied they took this use from others: indeed, there are no linguistic clues that suggest a citation, even an implicit one. In any case, it would be rather strange for an author to find the fourth proposition cited as the first in another author’s work and simply to accept such a variation without any comment. Supposing the existence of another case, unknown to us, in which the fourth proposition is called “first,” does not help get round the obstacle either: it would still remain to be explained why, in the two known cases, one does not cite the other, even with a simple quidam (respecting the practice of not naming contemporaries who were still alive). If the author of the Quaestiones were a pupil of Henry’s or someone influenced by his thought, as Pickavé suggests, then why not

117 See Pickavé 2007, p. 374.
explicitly cite Henry? Inversely, if the *Quaestiones* (perhaps by a master of the Faculty of arts) were one of the sources Henry used in redacting the first articles of the *Summa*, why not mention them? Perhaps the silence can be explained more easily by venturing that, in both cases, the author is the same: Henry.

Of course, a possible objection remains. It is well known that Henry frequently quoted himself. So one might ask, if the *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam* is effectively his work, why did he not explicitly cite it in the passages from the *Summa* that we have considered, or in his authentic production in general?\(^{118}\) It is also well known, however, that Henry meticulously edited his texts that were due for publication. The *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam* does not have the same degree of editorial care, and seems rather to be the result of a *reportatio*. So, if Henry is the author—in which case, it would be the young Henry—we should not be surprised that he avoided quoting a text he had not definitively revised, and that he preferred to use it tacitly. In the specific case under discussion, if my hypothesis is at least partially correct, there would have been no need for him to refer to the *Quaestiones* in order to justify the choice of calling the fourth proposition of *De causis* the “first” at the beginning of the *Summa*. As yet, I do not intend to express, with these reflections, a definitive judgement—as far as possible—on the attribution of the *Quaestiones* to Henry. Rather, I would like to add a new element in favour of a Henrican authorship, pending a more complete and conclusive picture, once my editorial work on the manuscript has been completed.

\(^{118}\) Even though, as V. Cordonier has rightly noted (see Cordonier 2014, p. xiv–xv) some passages in the *Summa* seem to be comments in miniature on Aristotle’s works, including the *Metaphysics*, which has, in any case, a very important role among Henry’s sources: in the first 58 articles of the *Summa* alone, there are about 300 quotations from the *Metaphysics* (including those of Averroes’ commentary).
Appendix I: Explicit Quotations of the Liber de causis in Henricus de Gandavo (?), Quaestiones super Metaphysicam (MS Escorial, h. II. 1)

Q. 36 (Ut rum veritas habe(a)t esse in intellectu divino), lib. II, f. 7vb, l. 42–46, contra: Oppositum arguitur sic, quasi per idem medium opposito modo sumendo: in illo praecipue debet veritas (esse) cuius praecipue est cognoscere res communi cognitione. Sed intellectui divino praecipue contingit res cognoscere, quoniam nihil ex ceteris habet cognitionem nisi per illuminationem ab intellectu divino, ut patet in Libro de causis. Ergo maxime veritas habet esse in intellectu divino. (Cf. Liber de causis V, 57–58)

Q. 37 (Ut rum ens et verum convertantur secundum rationem), lib. II, f. 7vb, l. 43–48, sed contra: Praeterea: prima propositione De causis “prima rerum creaturarum est esse” et in commento scribitur ibidem quod alia posteriora se habent per informationem ad ens. Cum ergo ‘verum’ aliquod nomen sit posterius natura nomine ‘entitatis’, secundum quod vult illa propositionio, secundum aliquam informationem (se) habebit verum ad ens. Talia autem secundum rationem differunt, ergo verum et s differunt secundum rationem. (Cf. Liber de causis IV, 37, p. 142 and XVII (XVIII), 148)

Q. 37 (Ut rum ens et verum convertantur secundum rationem), lib. II, f. 7vb, l. 9–14, ad argumenta: Ad alii dicendum quod illa propositionio nihil aliud dicit quam ordinem inter ens et verum, quia ens et verum sub eadem dispositione intelliguntur, ut patet ibi in secundo secundum finem litterae, quia dicit quod illud quod est primum ens (est) maximum ens et illud quod est primum verum est maximum verum. Unde, sicut est in ente, ita in deo. Nihilominus in alio sensu saepe arguitur de illa propositione. (Cf. Liber de causis IV, 37)

Q. 110 (Ut rum unum et ens debeant dici principia omnium), lib. III, f. 13va, l. 13–18, pro: Iuxta hoc quaeritur tertio utrum unum et ens debent dici principia omnium. Et arguitur primo quod sic, quia primum summum principium et causa idem, sed prima omnium sunt ens et unum: “prima enim rerum creaturarum est esse”, ut habetur prima propositione De causis. Unum ergo et ens debent dici rerum principia. (Cf. Liber de causis IV, 37, p. 142)

Q. 110 (Ut rum unum et ens debeant dici principia omnium), lib. III, f. 13vb, l. 34–41, ad argumenta: Quod obicitur primo, quod: “primum tamen et principium idem sunt”, istud verum est loquendo de prioritate reali. Quod autem unum et ens dicuntur priora super omnia, non est nisi communitate vocis. Si autem alia
prioritas realis sit in ipsis, hoc non est nisi in quantum descendunt ad principia et causas et de ipsis praedicantur. Et hoc modo habet veritatem quod “prima rerum creatarum est esse”: hoc enim modo ‘esse’ dicit eandem naturam cum unaquaque re. (Cf. Liber de causis IV, 37, p. 142)

Q. 256 (Utrum in creatis conveniat ponī aliquid perfectum), lib. v, f. 56ra, l. 27–31, pro: De primo arguitur quod nihil sit perfectum in creatis: nihil quod eget alio in sui esse est perfectum. Perfectum enim est cui nihil deest, sed quodlibet creatum indiget alio in sui esse, ut habetur in De causis, in illo theoremate: omne ens est penes primum et vita per vitam primit et scientia per scientiam primi, ergo etc. (Cf. Liber de causis, XVII (XVIII), 143, p. 173)

Q. 256 (Utrum in creatis conveniat ponī aliquid perfectum), lib. v, f. 56ra, l. 35–37, contra: Hoc etiam in De causis: per id causatum primum completum ut intelligentia est completa, perfecta, ultima in aliis virtutibus et bonitatibus. (Cf. Liber de causis IV, 43, p. 143)

Q. 256 (Utrum in creatis conveniat ponī aliquid perfectum), lib. v, f. 56ra–rb, l. 39–2, responsio: Et hoc est quod dicit Averroes: “perfecta sunt illa quorum nihil invenitur per quod dicuntur imperfecta in eis aut extrinsecum. Et ista est dispositio primi principii scilicet dei, in quo nihil invenitur per quod est imperfectus, quia penitus caret compositione cum fiat (sit) “in fine simplicitatis”, ut habetur in De causis. Compositum autem omne est ex vilioribus et nobilioribus, scilicet ex materialibus et formali, in quibus unum habet aliam imperfectionem respectu alterius, in hoc quoque unum eget alio, ut materiale formali, et e converso. Per consequens dicitur compositum imperfectum, eo quod eget illis ex quibus componitur extra. Similiter in primo non est aliquid per quod est imperfectum, quia nullo extrinsecus eget, sed omnia alia egent ipso. Et hoc est quod habetur in De causis: causa prima non cessat illuminare alia et non illuminatur lumine alterius. (Cf. Liber de causis, xx(xxI), 163, p. 180 and prop. v (vi), 58, p. 147.)

Q. 256 (Utrum in creatis conveniat ponī aliquid perfectum), lib. v, f. 56rb, l. 2–13, responsio: Loquendo igitur de tali perfectione, omnis creatura est imperfecta, quia habet in se (aliquid) per quod est imperfecta, ut principaliter composita, quae sese indigunt invicem. Et etiam eget alio exteriori, propeter quod similiter dicitur ‘imperfectum’. Eget enim bonitate causae primae quantum ad productionem esse, vel in se vel in suis principiis, et quo ad conservationem et quo ad illuminationem in cognitione, ut in illo theoremate: omne ens est ens per ens primum, etc. Et sic omne creatum dicitur (im)perfectum ex se, quia eget illis ex quibus componitur, compositione pro-
pria per recessum a simplicitate princi infinita et eget alio exteriori producente ipsum in esse et conservante et illuminante. Et ista duplex (im)perfectio significatur in De causis, ubi dicitur quod omne compositum est imperfectum quia eget alio, aut illis ex quibus est, ut disiuncta autem verificetur per utramque partem. (Cf. Liber de causis, XVII(XVIII), 143, p. 173 and XX(XXI), 164, p. 181)

Q. 256 (Utrum in creatis conveniat poni aliquid perfectum), lib. V, f. 56rb, l. 20–25, ad argumenta: Ad primum: “nullum creatum est perfectum quia eget alio”, dicendum quod verum est perfectione simpliciter. Nihilominus tamen potest esse perfectum perfectione quae decent causato, quoniam impossibile est consistere et non indigere alio, eo quod omne creatum in quantum huiusmodi eget causa sua et praeципue prima, primo theoremate De causis, ita quod ponere aliquid creatum et non indigere alio est ponere incompossibilitia simul. (Cf. Liber de causis, I, 1)

Q. 323 (Utrum verum complexum habeat esse in anima), lib. VI, f. 72ra, l. 48–49 / f. 72rb, l. 1–3: luxta hoc quæritur utrum verum complexum habeat esse in anima, et videtur quod non: nullum complexum in quantum huius<modi> habet esse in penitus simplici; sed anima est penitus simplex; ergo etc. Maior patet quia omne quod recipitur in aliquo, recipitur (per) modum recipientis, in De causis. (Cf. Liber de causis, IX(X), 99)
Appendix 2

Henricus de Gandavo (?), *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam*, lib. 11, q. 37, f. 7vb–7va, l. 48–14.

Ad hanc quaestionem dicendum quod, *sicut in scientiis demonstratibus*, semper debet aliquid esse quod est *per se notum* et cognitum ad quod habetur re[7va]solvi cognitio omnium eorum quae sunt in scientia demonstrativa, ut sunt ipsa prima *principia*. Aliter enim esset processus *in infinitum* ut quod hoc scitur per hoc et hoc per aliud, nisi standum erit in aliquo quod erit per se notum et in se haberet fidem suae credibilitatis: erit ergo stare ad tale primum et principium omnium eorum quae sunt in scientia. Sic similiter debet esse in cognitione intellectus, quod inter omnia quae debent cognosci et apprehendi ab ipso intellectu, debet esse *aliquid quod primo* et *per se ab intellectu* apprehenditur et cuius intellectus primo et per se intellectum informat, ad cuius conceptum omnes alii habent resolvi. Tale autem primum est ipsum ens in quantum est ens, secundum enim quod *vult Avicenna in 1º Metaphysicae suae*: illud cuius conceptus primo informat intellectum ens est inquantum ens, per cuius conceptum omnia *alia posteriora* habent intelligi, ita quod quidquid intelligitur post idemptitatem, *per additionem* aliquam *supra ens* intelligitur. Sic ergo est quod *nihil extrinsecae naturae potest* ei attribui sub ente quod non sit substantia vel accidentis, *quia unumquodque est per sui essentiam ens*.

Thomas de Aquino, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 1, a. 1, p. 4–5, l. 95–114.

Dicendum quod *sicut in demonstrabilibus* oportet fieri reductionem in aliqua *principia per se intellectui nota* ita investigando quid est unumquodque, alias utroboque *in infinitum* iretur, et sic periret omnino scientia et cognitionis rerum; *illud autem quod primo intellectus* concipit quasi notissimum et in quod conceptiones omnes resolvit est ens, *ut Avicenna dicit in principio suae Metaphysicae*: unde oportet quod omnes *aliae conceptiones intellectus* accipientur *ex additione ad ens*. Sed enti *non possunt addi aliquam quasi extraneam* per modum quo differentia additur generi vel accidentis subiecto, *quia quaelibet natura est essentialiter ens*, unde probat etiam Philosophus in 111º *Metaphysicae* quod ens non potest esse genus; sed secundum hoc aliquo dicuntur addere super ens in quantum exprimunt modum ipsius entis qui nomine entis non exprimitur, quod dupliciter contingit.
Appendix 3

Henricus de Gandavo(?), *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam*, q. 1 (⟨*An contingat scire*⟩), MS Escorial, h. ii. 1, lib. i, f. 1ra–1rb, l. 49–9: Sed tunc restat ⟨1rb⟩ difficultas quoniam (oportet quod) “illud quod addiscit aliquid habeat illius quod addiscit”, ut arguebat quaedam ratio; oportet (igitur) manifestare quid sit illud. Sed notandum quod ad hoc dicitur quandoque sic quod, cum duplex sit intellectus, scilicet agens et possibilis, quae sunt duae potentiae in eadem substantia animae radicatae—et ratione possibilis unibilis est corpori, ratione agentis separabilis a corpore, cum ratione qua agens est substantia intellectualis separata habens penes se exemplaria rerum concreata sicut intelligentia—cum huius⟨modi⟩ intellectus corpori unitur ratione qua possibilis est, ratione agentis retinet exemplaria concreata licet sub confusione quae prius habuit sub distinctione, secundum illud Boethii: “cum mentem cerne(re)m altam singula novi. Nunc membrorem condita nube summam retinui, singula perdidi".

Ps. Henry of Ghent, *Quaestiones in Librum de causis*, q. 51: Idem arguitur per Boethium in libro *De consolatione*, qui loquens in persona intellectus in conjunctione sui cum corpore dicit: “cum mentem tenerem altam, singula novi, nunc membrorem condita nube summam retinui, singula perdidi". (p. 129, l. 38–42)

Ad illud quod arguitur primo: si haberet exemplaria innata, laterent nos habitus nobilissimi etc., dicendum quod non oportet, quoniam, cum animae nobilis, ut nobis coniungitur, duplex sit virtus, scilicet agens et possibilis non est nobis copulata nisi sub ratione possibilis. Et sic non intelligit nisi per intellectum possibilem, qui intellectus de se non habet exemplaria concreata, licet ea habeat agens, cuius (exemplaria) non dicuntur esse habitus nostri. Propert quod non debenti dici nos latere.

Ad secundum: anima creata est imperfecta perfectibilis, dicendum quod verum est sub ratione qua creata est ut unibilis corpori. Hoc autem solum est ratione possibilis et non agentis. Ratione autem possibilis iam concessum est quod non habet exemplaria innata, sed eget exemplaribus acquisitis, ut perfectiatur (p. 131, l. 103–115)

Similiter dicendum ad auctoritatem Boethii quod ipse loquitur de anima ratione substantiae suae in se et ita sub ratione qua est agens, quae ut in statu suae separationis, secundum quem dicit ipsam cernere altam mentem, scilicet divinam, et nosse singula, per conjunctionem autem sui cum corpore amissete ( nisi) in summa. (p. 131, l. 121–125)
Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae*, 5, 3, 18–24, p. 146: Quis rep(p)ertam / queat ignarus noscere formam?/ an cum mentem cerneret altam / pariter summam et singula norat, / nunc membrorum condita nube / non in totum est oblita sui / summamque tenet singula perdens?

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