Manlevelt’s commentary on the *Isagoge* combines its highly original contents with an almost ‘classical’ styling of its *questiones*-format. This format is the subject of the first part of this chapter. Later in this chapter a suggestion will be made as to why Manlevelt would mould his treatment of the universals to the shape of a commentary rather than an autonomous tract.¹

5.1. *The Form*: Questiones

The form in which this commentary is written, *questiones*, is one of the standard ways of presentation of a philosophical standpoint accepted in the later medieval intellectual community. Basically, it is the thirteenth-century standardization of the way authoritative philosophical texts had been handled since Hellenistic times.

This kind of commentary consists of a series of highly formalized disputes about the problems to which a chosen text has given rise.² Originally such questions formed only the latter part of a teacher’s lectures. Gradually, the amount of straightforward, sequential commentary was replaced with a discussion of special problems. In time, consideration of these special problems, or questions (*questiones*), completely replaced the commentary.³

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¹ The reader is again referred to Libera 1996 and to that author’s introduction to Porphyry 1998 for a most excellent survey of the history of commentaries on the *Isagoge*. Once more, the summary in De Rijk 1977 of things discussed here has proved very useful to the present writer.

² Weijers 1997 stresses the fact that there is no general study on the subject of teaching methods in the Faculty of Arts. She points out that most studies published on the *questio* are related to theology. She adds (p. 341) that ‘il vaudrait mieux parler des *questiones* de la Faculté des Arts au pluriel, car il y en a de nombreuses espèces (celles dans les commentaires, les questions indépendantes des textes de base – soit la *questio* disputée pendant une dispute, soit les questions à propos des matières enseignées – les questions servant d’exercices, celles des compendia pour les examens).’

³ On the rise of the commentary in *questiones*-format see Kenny & Pinborg 1982, 30 f.; Grant 1996, 40 f. It is generally assumed that this form of commentary was instigated by the rules laid down in Aristotle’s freshly discovered *Topica*. According to De Rijk 1977, 24,
By being ‘published’—i.e. by copies of the lectures being rented or sold—the questiones format became the most important category of scholastic literature. Because it utilized the basic form of a scholastic disputation, this genre became almost synonymous with the notion of scholastic method.\(^4\)

The Questiones libri Porphyrii has all the usual characteristics of a commentary in the questiones genre, and more specifically, it may by its formal distinguishing marks alone be dated as an early fourteenth-century sample of the genre.\(^5\)

5.1.1. The Structuring of the Questiones

Especially in earlier phases of the development, one finds cases of several questiones being telescoped into one: first the arguments of a number of different questiones are given, and then the questiones are solved one after another. This practice is absent in the present text. Each questio stands on its own, in the sense that the argumentation concerning the subject-matter dealt with is neatly rounded-off within the scope of each successive questio. One is saved the intricate linking of questiones as is sometimes done for example by John Duns Scotus in his commentaries on the old logic and the Metaphysics, where the treatment of the subject matter touched upon in one questio is sometimes postponed to a later questio.\(^6\)

Another way of structuring such sub-questions, by dividing a questio into several articles, is absent in the present text as well. What we do find, however, is the fourteenth- and fifteenth-centuries’ practise of structuring

\(^4\) Grant 1996, 41.

\(^5\) On the general characteristics of the genre, see Kenny & Pinborg 1982, 30–33.

\(^6\) See B. Ioannis Duns Scoti Quaestiones in librum Porphyrii Isagoge et Quaestiones super Praedicamenta Aristotelis, ed. R. Andrews e.a. (St. Bonaventure 1999). In the commentary on the Isagoge questions 7 and 8 and questions 9–11, respectively, are telescoped into one. The same holds for questions 16–17, 18–19, 20–23, 30–36 and 37–38, respectively, of the commentary on the Categories.