During his long teaching career Henry of Ghent returned to the topic of freedom of the will again and again, often defending the freedom of the will against some of his contemporaries who, as Henry saw it, undermined the will’s freedom by some form of determinism. 1 Although Henry has been accused of holding a radical voluntarism, Raymond Macken has argued that he is closer to the center of the spectrum, having given the primacy of place to the will without depreciating the human intellect. 2 One of the most striking features of his defense of freedom of the will is his claim that the will moves itself by itself to the act of willing, and the concomitant claim that the Aristotelian principle that whatever is moved is moved by something else does not apply to the will. 3 For Henry held

---

1 “Ce sont près de vingt-cinq questions quodlibétales qu’Henri de Gand consacre au problème de la liberté et de la volonté, sur une période s’étendant sur presque quinze années” (François-Xavier Putallaz, Insolente liberté: Controverses et condamnations au XIIIe siècle [Fribourg, 1995], p. 177).


that, if anything moves the will, it introduces necessity into the will and its act. The claim that the will moves itself to its act of willing marks, according to Johann Auer, “der tiefgreifende Unterschied zwischen der aristotelisch-thomistischen und der scotistisch-franziskanischen Auffassung von Willen und Freiheit ...”

The development of Henry’s position on freedom of the will, which he defended, explained, and qualified over and over again during his many years of teaching at Paris, can best be seen in his *Quodlibetal Questions*, which represent the disputation held at Christmas and/or Easter from 1276 to 1292. His *Summa*, on the other hand, has the advantage of presenting his teaching in a more irenic and systematic fashion. The present study of freedom in Henry sketches his teaching on freedom of the will, mainly as it is found in his *Summa*, which contains his ordinary lectures to students at the University of Paris, lectures that were hardly ordinary in the ordinary sense of the word. Although the *Summa* remains incomplete, without ever getting beyond the articles on God to the intended articles on creatures, Henry’s article 45, “On the Will of God,” which dates from 1280–1281, presents his view of the will and its freedom, both in God and in creatures, in a series of four questions. After an examination of these questions, this study will turn briefly to some other features in Henry’s teaching on the freedom of the will drawn from his *Quodlibeta*, especially his rejection of the Aristotelian principle that whatever is moved is moved by something else and the claims that the human will is a higher power than the intellect and that the human will is a power that virtually contains its act.

I. Whether There is Will in God

The modern concern with freedom of the will is usually—and not unreasonably—focused upon the freedom of the human will. Henry, however, takes a larger view of things and locates the human will within a hierarchy

---