

Aristotle's Teleological Principle of Natural Philosophy  
"Nature does nothing in vain but always does what is best": Revisited  
——Comments on D. Henry's Paper "Optimality Reasoning in Aristotle's  
Natural Teleology"——

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The aim of this presentation is to update my Japanese translations of *De Partibus Animalium*, *De Motu Animalium*, and *De Incessu Animalium* as well as my notes on these works (2005), by reviewing D. Henry's recent brilliant paper "Optimality Reasoning in Aristotle's Natural Teleology" (2013).

Scholars nowadays tend to dismiss Aristotle's teleological concept of the nature -- that "nature does nothing in vain but always does what is best" -- as merely decorative because this phrase suggests a pseudo-human or transcendent agent in nature. Although such an agent or "Mother Nature" does not have a place in Aristotle's thought, this teleological concept of nature clearly plays an important role in Aristotle's scientific works on nature. Therefore, I agree with Henry's diagnosis that a detailed study of this concept is necessary.

Among modern eliminative studies on this concept of nature, P. M. Huby's anti-eliminative paper is a unique, short, but cryptic, paper "What did Aristotle Mean by 'Nature Does Nothing in Vain?'" (1991), to which Henry does not pay much attention, as he considers Huby to be an old-fashioned scholar who simply sees Aristotle's nature as "Mother Nature" or as a God-like agent. Huby's way of attacking the eliminative interpretations is, however, not by simply denying them. Her essay is a unique, complex integration of eliminative and non-eliminative interpretations. Therefore, it is hard to classify her as one among the old-fashioned scholars of anti-eliminative studies.

However, Henry's the most significant contribution to the study on Aristotelian teleology is, I think, the classification of the several constraints of the body-"design" of living things by nature. Henry's detailed analysis reveals that animals and plants have not only formal and teleological constraints on their materials but also material constraints on their forms and ends, by explaining the level of body-"plan" making by nature. This insight gained from Henry's paper is important to the study of Aristotle's natural philosophy and the metaphysics of the relationship between form and matter.