

Aristotle

Aristotle (Hayagrīva) [26:38 Minutes]

Audio

Hayagrīva: Aristotle believes that, "God expresses Himself through matter." Although he also believes that, "God is transcendent and separate from the universe."

Prabhupāda: Yes but he believes some way and other believes some way, so which is..., which one is correct?

Hayagrīva: He does not follow Plato's dualism of the, "Here" and the, "There." Plato made a sharp distinction between the material universe and the spiritual universe, but Aristotle believes there is no sharp distinction because God expresses Himself in matter. Since matter is simply one of God's energies, the finite reflects the infinite.

Prabhupāda: So what is the other energy? Does he know?

Hayagrīva: He doesn't concern himself with that. He says that by knowing something of the world about us, we can know something about God.

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Hayagrīva: So his, his...

Prabhupāda: It may be that you know something about God. Then you have to admit that you do not know everything about God. So their knowledge is imperfect. Our point is that we know everything of God—from God. So that knowledge is perfect. As Kṛṣṇa said in the Seventh Chapter [Bg 7.1], that: *mayy āsakta-manāḥ pārtha yogaṁ yuñjan mad-āśrayaḥ*.

[Now hear, O son of Pṛthā [Arjuna], how by practicing yoga in full consciousness of Me, with mind attached to Me, you can know Me in full, free from doubt.]

"If you concentrate your mind or your attachment to Me, and if you execute yoga meditation, always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, that is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Then you understand Me fully and without any doubt." So instead of speculating on God, if we simply think of God, that will help us. To [indistinct] from darkness, if you speculate about the sun by some suggestion, by some concoction, this is one kind of knowledge. But if you actually come out of the darkness and see the sun, then it is complete you comprehend.

Hayagrīva: Now...

Prabhupāda: These Western philosopher, mostly they are contemplating about the sunshine in darkness. But that is not the way of understanding the sun. Best thing is to come in the sunshine, see yourself, see the sunshine, see the sun. That is complete.

Hayagrīva: Here's another point. Aristotle says that, "It is not material objects that are trying to realize God," like as Plato says. "But God realizing Himself through material objects. God does this in a variegated way and in an infinite way." So God realizes the potentiality of a rose or of a man by creating a rose, a flower, a man that is perceivable by the material senses. So the world is more real to Aristotle than it is to Plato.

Prabhupāda: [coughs] If God has created the material world and material variety, so means He is in full awareness how to do things nicely. That is perfectness of God. He knows everything how to do it perfectly, naturally. Just like even a child, we get daily experience, when we offer some cake in the Deity room, the child immediately takes it and puts into the mouth. Although she's very small baby, [s]he doesn't require any education about taking the cake and what to do with it. Immediately puts in. So this natural, what is called,

knowledge, that is God's knowledge. He knows everything perfectly well, and when He produces a rose flower, it is all-perfect. That is God's... God is not..., He has to get the knowledge through some source. He is already in awareness of everything. That is God. So He hasn't got to know His capacity through matter.

Hayagrīva: No. Now Plato..., er Aristotle would say that, "The flower is real because it's..., because it has its basis in the ultimate reality, God."

Prabhupāda: That..., how God can be not in knowledge? He is full in knowledge. That is God.

Hayagrīva: Plato would say that, "The flower is a shadow of reality, a perverted reflection of reality." So which point of view would be...?

Prabhupāda: Yes, it is... When the flower is in the material world..., material world is perverted reflection of the spiritual world. That's a fact. We have got experience that material things are created, but in the spiritual world things are not created; they are already there, everlasting. So it appears Aristotle has no knowledge of the spiritual world.

Hayagrīva: Aristotle defines God as, "Pure form and pure act and purely nonmaterial. He is absolute spirit and is the unmoved mover."

Prabhupāda: Yes. He is absolute spirit, there is no doubt upon it, but why He should come to know Himself through material world? That is defective.

Hayagrīva: Aristotle's God contemplates Himself... He does not have any knowledge of the world...

Prabhupāda: Who?

Hayagrīva: ...as such.

Prabhupāda: Who has no knowledge?

Hayagrīva: God.

Prabhupāda: [chuckles] What kind of God is that?

Hayagrīva: I don't know.

Prabhupāda: [chuckles] This is Aristotle's ignorance, that he does not know what is God and he is speaking about God. That is his ignorance.

Hayagrīva: Nor, he says, "Nor can God return the love that He receives. He doesn't love or care for mankind."

Prabhupāda: So He is in perfect knowledge, and why He should not reciprocate? So God reciprocates. It is said in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [Bg 4.11], *ye yathā mām prapadyante tāms tathaiva bhajāmy aham*.

[All of them—as they surrender unto Me—I reward accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Pṛthā.]

As much as we offer our love to God, He..., what is called, cooperates, cooperative response. When we full surrender and fully in loving service, then we can understand God, what He is actually.

Hayagrīva: Well Aristotle sees the love going one way. He says that, "God is loved by everything in the universe and that He attracts all objects in the universe because everything is striving toward Him and longing for Him."

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Hayagrīva: But there is no mention of God as a person, although he says, "He's pure form." Is this an imagined form like the Māyāvādīs may imagine a form?

Prabhupāda: Yes. He, he has got the tilt of Māyāvāda. That is his imperfect knowledge of God. Because he does not receive knowledge from God, he speculates; therefore his knowledge is imperfect.

Hayagrīva: Aristotle's belief in the soul changed. He has three, three conceptions of the soul. One is that the soul is a separate substance, another is that the body is the instrument of the soul, and the third is the soul is the form of the body.

Prabhupāda: Yes, this can be explained. The body is just like the dress of the soul. So our dress is made according to our body. The tailor takes the measurement of the body and makes the coat accordingly. So the coat appears with the hand because we have got hand. Coat, pant appears as a leg because we have got leg. So this body is simply ah, what is called? Coating or shirting of the soul. Actually the soul has got form, shape, form, and therefore the cloth, which will generally has no shape. It when it comes in contact with the soul, it becomes a shape.

Hayagrīva: Now for both Plato and Aristotle, God is known by reason, not by revelation or by religious experience, not by mystical experience...

Prabhupāda: That is nonsense.

Hayagrīva: Uhmm.

Prabhupāda: You cannot... God is unlimited. You have got limited power to see or to smell or to touch. You have got all limited, and God is unlimited. So you cannot understand God by your limited power of sensual activities. Therefore God is revelation. We say that: *ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ* [Cc Madhya 17.136].

[Therefore material senses cannot appreciate Kṛṣṇa's holy name, form, qualities and pastimes. When a conditioned soul is awakened to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and renders service by using his tongue to chant the Lord's holy name and taste the remnants of the Lord's food, the tongue is purified, and one gradually comes to understand who Kṛṣṇa really is.]

You cannot understand by speculating your senses. That is not possible. When

you engage yourself in His service, then He reveals. *Nāham prakāśaḥ sarvasya yoga-māyā-samāvṛtaḥ* [Bg 7.25].

[I am never manifest to the foolish and unintelligent. For them I am covered by My eternal creative potency [*yoga-māyā*]; and so the deluded world knows Me not, who am unborn and infallible.]

God says that, "I am not exposed to everyone. I am covered by the *yoga-māyā*." That is fact. So unless God reveals Himself... So God not only reveals, He appears and great authorities, they accept Him. Just like Kṛṣṇa appeared, and great authorities like Vyāsadeva, Nārada, Śukadeva Gosvāmī and then the *ācāryas*, Rāmānujācārya, Madhvācārya and Caitanya Mahāprabhu—big, big stalwart scholars and transcendentalists—they accepted Kṛṣṇa. All the *śāstras* accept Kṛṣṇa. Long, long years, five thousand years, when there was no philosophy in the Western world. The God revealed Himself, face-to-face and Arjuna saw Him and he accepted Him and similarly other great persons accepted Him. So God is not to be speculated but by one's service, when He is pleased, He reveals Himself.

Hayagrīva: There is a great deal of emphasis in Aristotle on reason. He says, "Happiness depends on man's acting in a rational way. The rational way is the virtuous way. The virtuous way is the way of intellectual insight." There is a suggestion of sense control but no *bhakti*. So is it possible to attain happiness simply by controlling the senses—by the mind?

Prabhupāda: Yes. So that is the process of becoming a human being. The lower beings, the animals, they do not know this process. Just like they are busy only for sense gratification—eating, sleeping, mating and defense—their only business. But a human being can be engaged by proper guidance in contemplation. Just like Aristotle is contemplating or Plato is con..., this is human being's business. But such contemplation should be guided by authorities. Otherwise one can contemplate with his limited senses for many, many millions of years, it will be impossible to understand what is God.

Hayagrīva: But for happiness, or *ānanda*, isn't *bhakti* essential, love, or *ānanda*?

Prabhupāda: *Ānanda* means... God is full *ānanda*, *sac-cid-ānanda*. He is eternal—*sat*; He is spiritual; and He is *ānanda*—bliss. So unless one comes in contact with God, there is no question of *ānanda*. *Raso vai saḥ* [*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.7.1].

[The Supreme Absolute Truth is *rāsa*. The *jīva*, the living entity, experiences ineffable bliss by attaining this *rāsa*. Who would endeavour to keep the body and soul together, if it were that *rāsa*, the embodiment of the eternal principle, were not the personification of bliss? Who could breathe without the Lord giving breath? Who could be happy without the Lord giving happiness? It is He who gives pleasure and transcendental bliss to all.]

In the Vedic literatures we understand that God is reservoir of all pleasure, unlimited. So when you come in contact with God, then you will taste what is pleasure. So material pleasure is only perverted reflection of the real pleasure. Real pleasure is possible when we come in contact with God.

Hayagrīva: In his ethics; *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle writes, "Moral excellence, moral excellence is concerned with pleasure and pain. It is pleasure that makes us do base or ignoble action, and pain that prevents us from doing noble actions. For that reason," as Plato says, "Men must be brought from childhood to feel pleasure and pain at the proper things, for this is correct education."

Prabhupāda: Hm.

Hayagrīva: So how does this correspond to the Vedic view of education?

Prabhupāda: Vedic view of education is: actually there is no pleasure in this material world, because we may arrange for all pleasure artificially in the material world, but all of sudden one has to die. So where is the pleasure? If you make arrangement of all pleasure and all of a sudden death comes upon

you, then where is pleasure? So first of all they must, if they are intelligent, they must make arrangement that they will be able to enjoy the pleasures they have created. Otherwise, where is pleasure? It is disappointment. That is going on. They are trying to become pleased by inventing so many things, but because they are controlled by some superior element, so at any moment they will be kicked out of the pleasure platform. Then where is pleasure? Therefore the conclusion should be: there is no pleasure in this material world. If one is searching after pleasure in the material world, then it is the same thing as the animal is searching water in the desert. There is no water in the desert; it is simply illusion, and he is preparing for death. Because he is thirsty, he is searching after water, and in the wrong way he is searching water. The ultimate result will be he will die of thirst.

Hayagrīva: One last statement from Aristotle. He states, in his *Politics*, he says, "The beauty of the body is seen, whereas the beauty of the soul is not seen." Is this true?

Prabhupāda: Hm. Beauty of the soul is real beauty, and beauty of the body is superficial. Not every body is beautiful. There are so many bodies very ugly, and there are so many bodies very beautiful. So the material sense, this ugliness and beautifulness, they are all artificial. But the beauty of the soul is real; that is not artificial. So unless we see the beauty of the Supersoul, Kṛṣṇa, we have no idea what is actually beauty. Therefore the devotees, they want to see the beauty of Kṛṣṇa, not any artificial beauty of this material world.

Hayagrīva: There's no correspondence there. That is to say, a beautiful body does not necessarily house a beautiful soul. There's no correspondence.

Prabhupāda: No, there is correspondence, because we say this material world is perverted reflection. So originally the soul is beauty, but here the beauty is covered. But we can simply have a glimpse of the real beauty from the material covering, but we have to wait to see the beauty of the soul. That is real point.

Hayagrīva: I read that Socrates was a very ugly man but that he had a very beautiful soul, and people were attracted to his soul. That was the, supposedly...

Prabhupāda: Yes. The example can be given that the quail, it is called *kokil*, it is very black, just like crow. But when he vibrates the voice, it is so beautiful that people are attracted. So the beauty of the body is secondary. The beauty of the soul is primary. So just like a *mūrkhā*, a illiterate man, nicely dressed—he is beautiful so long he does not speak. And as soon as he speaks, we can understand what is his position. So *tāvac ca śobhate mūrkhō yāvat kiñcin na bhāsate*: a ugly, illiterate rascal, fool, is beautiful so long he does not speak. And as soon as he speaks we can understand what is his position. So this external beauty is no beauty. If an ugly man, if he speaks very nicely, he will attract so many people, and if a beautiful man, if he speaks nonsense, nobody cares for him. So real attraction is different and artificial attraction is different.

Hayagrīva: I think that concludes Aristotle.

Prabhupāda: Hm. [end]