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## NIETZSCHEAN ACCENTS IN THE WORK OF SHREE RAJNEESH (OSHO)

### Akcenty nietzscheańskie w twórczości Shree Rajeesha (Osho)

Słowa kluczowe: Shree Rajneesh (Osho), Friedrich Nietzsche, wolność, wielbłąd, lew, dziecko

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#### Streszczenie

Głównym celem tekstu jest przeanalizowanie niektórych aspektów filozofii Nietzschego, do których nietrafnie odwołuje się Shree Rajneesh (Osho), a które pominął Michael Skowron w swoich badaniach, oraz dokonanie ich krytycznej interpretacji, uwzględniającej kontekst, w jakim funkcjonują one w całej refleksji tego guru. Metodologia badań zastosowana w artykule opiera się na analizie, rekonstrukcji i syntezie tekstów Osho. Przeprowadzone badania wskazują, że Osho postrzega poglądy Nietzschego w sposób nienaukowy, dopasowując je subiektywnie do założeń własnej koncepcji wolności i samorozwoju człowieka.

#### Abstract

The main aim of the text is to analyse some aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy that are inappropriately referred to by Shree Rajneesh (Osho) and omitted by Michael Skowron in his research, and to interpret them critically, taking into account the context in which they function in the whole reflection of this guru. The research methodology used in the article is based on the analysis, reconstruction and synthesis of Osho's texts. The research conducted indicates that Osho perceives Nietzsche's views in a non-scientific way, subjectively fitting them to the assumptions of his own concept of freedom and human self-development.

## Introduction

In his paper entitled 'Nietzsche in Indian eyes. Muhammad Iqbal, Sri Aurobindo, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh', Michael Skowron, a German expert on the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, addresses the subject

of the relation of his thought to Indian philosophy. As he emphasises (Skowron 2006: 1), his aim is not to analyse how Nietzsche viewed Far Eastern reflection, but to explore what Indian thinkers thought of Nietzsche. Skowron discusses this issue by referring to the work of, among others, Shree Rajneesh (1931–1990),<sup>1</sup> the guru and philosopher, known at the end of his life as Osho.<sup>2</sup> Although Osho's thought is not academic or systematic, he is one of the most popular 20<sup>th</sup> century Far Eastern thinkers. His teachings have been published in numerous books that have readers all over the world and have been translated into more than thirty different languages, which has made him a recognisable and even influential author. In his lectures, Osho often referred to Nietzsche, so reconstructing his views on this German philosopher seems a task worth undertaking.

Although beforementioned Skowron's work is an important contribution to the state of research into Osho's thought, I believe that it does not completely cover the problem of Osho's relation to Nietzsche's philosophy. This is because it omits a certain part of Osho's work, in which we can also find his statements on Nietzsche.

The aim of this article is to present Osho's views, in that aspect of them which indirectly or directly refers to Nietzsche's philosophy.<sup>3</sup> Although Skowron's work is my starting point, I also take into account other works of the aforementioned guru, which have been omitted by this author. Due to the lack of a systematic character of Osho's phi-

<sup>1</sup> Skowron refers to his various texts: 'The First Principle. Talks on Zen'; 'The Rajneesh Bible'; 'Light on the Path. Talks in the Himalayas'; 'The Search. Talks on the Ten Bulls of Zen'; 'Zen: The Diamond Thunderbolt'; 'God is dead. Now Zen is the only living truth'; 'And the Flowers showered. Discourses on Zen', but focuses primarily on the series of lectures that the guru gave to his disciples. In these lectures, he commented on one of Nietzsche's most famous texts, namely "Tako rzecze Zaratustra" [Thus Spoke Zarathustra], in a spontaneous, free-flowing manner that was by definition non-academic (without notes, workshop or research methodology). This lecture was initially recorded in its entirety by the students on audio-video equipment and then published in two parts in a book form as "Zarathustra. A God that can dance. Talks on Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*" and "Zarathustra. The laughing Prophet. Talks on Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*". See Skowron 2006: 3; Hrehorowicz 2021a: 140, footnote 4.

<sup>2</sup> In this work I will consistently use the phrase 'Osho'. However, the biography of Shree Rajneesh (Osho), see Sieradzan 2006: 115–130.

<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche is a source of inspiration for Osho. This is pointed out by Hugh B Urban in his work *Zorba The Buddha: Capitalism, Charisma and the Cult of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh* (Urban 1996: 169).

losophy, the article also does not present a systematic analysis of the reception of Nietzsche's thought in the works of this teacher. In the text, I limit myself to an analysis of how Osho expresses his views on Nietzsche's philosophy. In particular, I focus on the problem of freedom and self-development as seen by Osho, where one can clearly see the influence of the author of "Beyond Good and Evil", e.g. the concept of the three transformations or the idea of the 'death of God'. I will, however, omit those references to Nietzsche's philosophy that are purely incidental and such statements by Osho in which the figure of Nietzsche appears only contextually. This will not only give the reader a fuller picture of what Osho thought of the German thinker, but also a better understanding of the main tenets of his own philosophy.

### **The issue of freedom**

Osho refers to Nietzsche's views, among others, in his reflections on the question of human freedom. In these, he focuses, in particular, on providing an insight into its spiritual aspect. In his view, authentic or spiritual human freedom contains both a negative and a positive dimension. He believes that they are complementary to each other – they are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. Moreover, according to him, freedom thus understood is not something given, but is the starting point of the individual's process of individuation and spiritual development. It passes through successive stages of the metamorphosis of consciousness, that is, the 'larva', 'caterpillar' and 'butterfly' stages. Osho refers to Nietzsche's famous metaphor, who in "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", in the chapter "On the Three Transformations", describes the spiritual transformation of the prophet Zarathustra, which also consists of three successive phases: conformist camel, oppositional lion and finally, life-affirming child (Osho 2008b: 75; 2008a: 246–247).

According to Osho (Osho 2015: 211, 214, 216, 218, 220, 222, 241), on coming into the world, the child experiences the source, existential state of being a nobody, that is, loneliness. It is therefore like a larva: stuck in one place, it does not change or move (Osho 2008b: 73; 2008a: 245). According to Osho, at the larva stage, although the individual is conscious and capable of receiving external stimuli, they are not yet able to produce anything of their own. Therefore, they are subject to

various external influences, shaping their identity, which is constituted, among other things, by assimilating the cultural heritage of their own society – religion, morals, traditions, customs and values, drawn from models specific to their own cultural and social circle (Osho 2008b: 75). As with the Nietzschean camel, freedom of choice in this phase is reduced to affirmation, to the possibility of saying “yes” (Ibidem: 79). It is thus a situation in which the individual, unable to say “no”, becomes a docile and in fact, has no choice. As a result, the individual submits to the norms offered to them externally and fully identifies with alien beliefs and values, which aims at creating a conscience in them.<sup>4</sup> According to Osho, it is freedom that is reduced to the ability to shape one’s life according to conformistically accepted rules and values. Therefore, in his view, it is an ‘empty word’ because it does not take into account self-creation, which is affirmed precisely in the fact of choice.

According to Osho, the assimilation characteristic of the larva state plays an important role in human spiritual development. We build on the experiences accumulated by other people in the past, because if everyone started from scratch, there would be no progress (Osho 2008b: 75–76; 2008a: 247). Nevertheless, if we stop at this phase, we pay for it by running away from ourselves and by becoming dependent, because we thereby give up exploring and realising our innate potential and setting our own life goals on this basis, or in any case, we significantly reduce the chance of realising the fullness of our innate potential. Society conditions the individual to give up their self-centredness and to sacrifice their natural ‘self’ in favour of a duty to other people (Osho 2008b: 79; 2008a: 240). As a result, on the one hand, the individual

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<sup>4</sup> According to Osho, the conscience is part of the mind. It is artificial because it has been produced in us by society, which from early childhood teaches us to think in terms of right and wrong and to cultivate moral norms passed down from generation to generation, which are instilled in us even before we have a reflective consciousness and an independent ability to distinguish between right and wrong. See Osho 2008a: 183, 185, 190, 191. This is why, Osho argues that conscience is a ‘false substitute’ that enslaves individuals and whose only real purpose is to gain inner control over man, see ibidem: 183, 184; Osho 2017a: 70, 71. It is worth noting here that Nietzsche also sees conscience as a product of society, the result of a long-term process that runs over centuries. Its aim is to raise an autonomous, responsible individual who can make promises (Nietzsche 1997: 63–66). Thus, although both Osho and Nietzsche are of the opinion that conscience develops in man in the process of socialisation, Osho views it entirely negatively, as a means of enslaving man, while Nietzsche argues that it is the condition for man to become a sovereign individual, the ‘master of free will’ (Ibidem: 65).

is strengthened physically and psychologically, for they have a certain sense of security resulting from submission to authority or from a membership to a social group. On the other hand, as a result of losing their 'solitude' and adopting a passive, conformist attitude, they also lose their individuality, understood by Osho as the integrity of their own natural 'self' (Osho 2006: 187; 2020b: 105–106),<sup>5</sup> which makes it difficult or impossible for them to express themselves in a spontaneous and creative activity.

The larva phase in Osho's classification corresponds to the camel in Nietzschean terms (Osho 2008a: 247, 248), for in both cases the dominant characteristics are assimilation, obedience, dependence and helplessness (Ibidem: 249). Although this stage is, according to Osho, inevitable for every human being and, up to a certain point in life, even necessary for their survival, the development of human consciousness should not stop there (Osho 2008b: 83; 2008a: 248). Otherwise, people will suffer. Furthermore, he points out that although in this first stage of development the individual is conditioned in one way or another, it does not at all mean that they are determined by something to behave in a certain way. After all, they still have their free will. Therefore, they can move on to the next phase,<sup>6</sup> in which their personal identity is

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<sup>5</sup> Osho advocates a holistic vision of man (see Hrehorowicz 2016) – he believes that every human being is a certain internally integrated whole, and that everyone has his or her own innate, unique developmental potential. In the larva phase, when the individual becomes conformist, they lose their individuality and uniqueness, and thus they fall into reductionism to the universal rather than the individual.

<sup>6</sup> The genesis of the transition from the first to the second phase of development is seen by Osho very similarly to Nietzsche, whose thought he comments on. Osho's commentary here coincides with a rather commonly accepted interpretation of this philosophy. In order to clarify this thought, let me quote a passage from one such interpretation and then contrast it with the relevant passage from Osho's commentary. Analysing the transformation of a camel into a lion, Leszek Galas writes (Galas 2018: 376): "The peaceful existence of the 'juvenile spirit' comes to an end when he notices that the values he upholds become contradictory in certain situations. The moment the principles he professes become a burden beyond his strength, he decides to reject them. Zarathustra calls this moment 'the hour of great contempt'. The self of such a person becomes a tabula rasa again, a spiritual desert, and the camel transforms into a lion". And here is the relevant passage from Osho's commentary: "The first state, the camel, is unconscious. The second state, the lion, is subconscious – slightly higher than unconscious. The first glimpses of the conscious appear. The sun rises and a few rays fall into the dark room where you sleep. The unconscious is no longer unaware. Something has moved in it; the unconscious has become the subconscious. But remember, the transition from camel to lion is not as great a change as the transition from lion to

no longer conditioned by socialisation, but rather grows out of a need for personal uniqueness. It is shaped by the attitude of rebellion and independent creation of the meaning of one's own life, which is characteristic of this stage. This is the 'caterpillar' stage, which in Nietzschean terms corresponds to the 'lion' stage.

According to Osho, the Nietzschean lion rejects heteronomous values, previous moral principles, traditions and customs, and previous authorities – in a word, the past that constructed the social self and the camel's conscience – in order to regain its lost independence and autonomous consciousness, which at the same time constitutes the condition for personal self-creation and is the basis for establishing its own principles and values (Osho 2008a: 248, 252). Similarly, the caterpillar abandons its larva in order to be able to explore life and develop further with the beginning of 'free movement', which for Osho symbolises the acquisition of independence, freedom of action (Osho 2008b: 74).

The man-lion, however, over-identifies with his mind, by which he understands rebellion in terms that are to some extent reactive: for he defines his 'self' mainly through his opposition to the camel (Ibidem: 77). The lion's actions, values and ideals are the way he reacts to what the 'old' society has done to him so far. Therefore, according to Osho, the lion's existence is, at this stage, only "the shadow of the camel constantly stalking him" (Osho 2008b: 78; 2008a: 249). The lion is constantly fighting against something because he secretly fears that the camel may return. Like Nietzsche, Osho believes that someone who constantly recalls and questions his past is not really free in a positive sense, because his freedom is an expression of pure negation (Osho 2008b: 78; 2008a: 249). For Nietzsche, then, it is a kind of resentment: the individual subordinates their existence to a negative rule, but creates nothing in the positive sense, and is therefore "still a barren desert" (Galas 2018: 377). This is the reason why Osho argues that independence as such is only a negative dimension of freedom, a kind of freedom 'from something' that cannot give us true fulfilment (Osho 2008b: 74; 2008a: 246).

child. This change is a reversal, so to speak. The camel begins to 'stand on its head' and transforms into a lion. The camel says: 'yes', the lion says: 'no'. The camel is obedient, the lion is disobedient. The camel is positive, the lion is negative. It must be understood that the camel very often said 'yes' and had to refuse to say 'no'. And then the 'no' accumulates and there comes a moment when it wants to take revenge on the 'yes'. The repressed part wants to take revenge. Then the whole wheel turns – the camel turns upside down and becomes a lion". Osho 2008b: 88; Cf. Ibidem: 89; 2008a: 253.

Although Osho admits that the unruly lion exercises his free will, he is able to say 'no' and has the courage to fight the 'great monster' called 'you can't' (Osho 2008b:77). By questioning the old values, however, he is unable to approach them in a truly critical way, and so he will not gain an awareness of his potential, the discovery of which would enable him to live according to his own authentic values and express himself in a spontaneous creative activity. In other words, if the individual-personal freedom of the lion is combined with an attitude of rebellion considered by him only in a horizontal way,<sup>7</sup> he thus focuses too much on the external aspect of his functioning in the world. For he is preoccupied with the creation of his 'self', which crystallises by engaging in a constant struggle *for* or *against* something in the name of professed ideas, big dreams and utopias. Such an obsessive struggle, which becomes the main goal of his life, does not, however, stem from the affirmation of his own inner potential. It is therefore not creative, but is the result of a reaction to some element of the external world, and thus reduces freedom to being reactive (Osho 2008b: 131).<sup>8</sup> This

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<sup>7</sup> According to Osho, such a form of rebellion will not only fail to bring the individual complete liberation from his past, but will lead to him squandering the chance of it being individual and peaceful, and thus proceeding without violence against himself or others. Like Nietzsche, Osho believes that the lion's desire to rise higher and create a new society stems from his hidden inferiority complex acquired at the camel stage. This complex is reinforced by the fear of losing its independence and causes the lion's consciousness to identify with his 'I want' and thus the hitherto will of the 'servant' becomes the will of the commanding one. This is exemplified, for example, by politically-minded activists or revolutionaries who, in their desire to create the world anew, were able to cruelly torture ordinary people just to destroy anything that was not close to their new ideals and values.

<sup>8</sup> According to Osho, an example of a person who realised this kind of freedom in his life is Nietzsche himself, who, according to him, was so obsessed with Jesus Christ that he tried to become one himself. This is supposed to be evidenced by various well-known facts from Nietzsche's biography, such as the fact that his most famous work, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", is written in a way that resembles the Gospels and the statements of Jesus, or the fact that towards the end of his life, when his illness intensified, he signed his letters 'Antichrist Friedrich Nietzsche', and even published a book with this title in 1895. Osho believes that because of this obsession, Nietzsche became stuck in his personal spiritual development at the stage of the lion, and thus missed the chance to experience the next, higher phase. In his view, Nietzsche "could not forget Jesus, even when he went mad. [...] One can discern [...] a deep envy of Jesus that dominated him for life. It destroyed his great creativity. He could have been a rebel, but he relegated himself to a reactionary. He could have brought something new to the world, but was unable to. He remained possessed by Jesus" (Osho 2008b: 131–132).

Osho addresses the issue of Nietzsche's attitude to Jesus in other places as well. For example, he says that he shares Nietzsche's view that "Christ was the last Chris-

means that the lion is essentially moving on the same horizontal level as the camel before, which the guru explains by comparing to the example of the larva and the caterpillar: “the cocoon is stuck in one place and the caterpillar starts moving, but on the same ground. Movement has occurred, but the level is the same” (Osho 2008b: 89; Cf. *Ibidem*: 73; Osho 2008a: 253). Therefore, the lion still belongs to the same world as the camel. Although the rebellion may cause him to change, for example, the content conditioning his thinking and the mind-related features of his character and personality or his behaviour, no individual, ‘total inner transformation’ takes place in him. Osho understands such a transformation mystically as going beyond the hitherto identification with the ‘I’, which is the source of the inferiority complex, to a total transformation of the world view – from dualistic to non-dualistic. Hence, he argues that while the rebellious lion condemns the old kind of man-camel, he does not realise that he himself – at a deeper level – is in a sense a continuation of it. He is better, more magnificent, stronger, more courageous and more intelligent than the camel, but the difference between them is only in the intensity of these qualities – they are stronger or weaker, but deep down the lion is merely a more refined version of the camel. This is why, Osho believes that although the lion – unlike the camel – proclaims the future, in reality it will not begin to live it, because the so-called ‘new’ can only come when the old ceases to exist and creates space for the new (Osho 2008b: 86; 2008a: 252). The rebellious lion should therefore abandon the ego he has created as an expression of rebellion against the camel, for only then can he move on to the third stage of his development. Otherwise, no further transformation of consciousness will take place in him and he will be stuck in the second stage.

Osho refers to the third stage of spiritual development as the butterfly phase, which, according to his own interpretation, corresponds

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tion” because he believes that “every individual is unique” and no one can be compared to anyone else (Osho 2019b: 251). On the other hand, however, Osho argues, at the same time, that Nietzsche is wrong here, because Jesus was not really a Christian. The word ‘Christ’, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew term ‘messiah’, did not come into circulation until many years after the death of Jesus, who for this very reason could not have known such a term. According to Osho, Jesus considered himself simply a Jew who “was crucified precisely because he was proving that he was the Jewish messiah” (*Ibidem*: 252; Cf. 2020a: 203).



to the attaining child or sage state in the Nietzschean classification.<sup>9</sup> Although there are numerous parallels here, as both the butterfly and Nietzsche's child are characterised by innocence, wisdom, interdependence and creativity, there are also some differences, for example, in the way they both characterise the transition from the second to the last phase of development. Both Osho and Nietzsche conceive of this third transition in terms that are not so much evolutionary, but rather revolutionary (Osho 2008a: 254) and emphasise that in order for it to take place, a kind of leap into a completely different dimension of existence is necessary, in which there are no longer external or internal conflicts and the individual becomes unlimitedly creative. According to Osho, however, this metamorphosis is achieved through the Master (Osho 2008b: 90, 91), whereas in Nietzsche's case, it is the impersonal will of power that is behind it. (Cf. Galas 2018: 378). The butterfly stage is therefore reached with the help of the Master as a result of the abandonment of one's ego, one's hitherto identification with one's mind and personality and thus entering into oneself and discovering what is source, primordial within us. The meaning of this individual inner transformation is defined by Osho in various terms. He mostly uses phrases such as realising or discovering one's "first" or "true" nature, one's "deepest being", one's "natural potential", the "deepest core of one's being", one's "state of innocence" or one's "solitude". He also uses terms taken from Far Eastern philosophy, e.g.: the experience of a state of "non-mind" or a state of "no-mind", which he identifies with what he calls post-mind or post-self (Cf. Osho 2008b: 91).

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<sup>9</sup> In his analysis of "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", Lech Ostasz notes that the relatively frequent use of the word 'sage' is not really accompanied by any description of a sage. Instead, it contains "one or two utterances that come close to the utterances characteristic of the figure of the catalyst and the sage" according to Ostasz's own classification (Ostasz 2021: 62). In his view, a 'catalyst' is someone who has reached such a high degree of self-actualisation that they are able to spontaneously influence and inspire other people without pressuring them or intrusively telling them what to do. Such a person has the ability to sense changes in the potential of those around them, and can therefore influence their mood and the atmosphere around them by, for example, listening to what they say, asking them questions, etc., see *ibidem*: 44–49. A 'wise man', on the other hand, is someone who lives away from everyday, day-to-day problems, and although he does not struggle with the norms of social life, they are not a guideline for him. He does not have any specific ideals or causes for which he fights, as he is a person of heightened awareness and intuition, who has the ability to focus on what is important and see the reality around him more deeply and perceptively than others. See *ibidem*: 50–57.

According to Osho, this inner transformation of the individual also translates into his way of functioning in the world. On the one hand, by delving into themselves, they seek the truth about themselves, thus becoming aware of who they really are, regardless of the social roles they play or the opinions others may have about them. On the other hand, by transcending themselves, they go out into the external world, which becomes all the more complete for them the more fully they are aware of their own being. This awareness of self-discovery, of one's spirituality and of who one is, brings inner freedom to the individual. It consists in the fact that the individual is fully autonomous. The individual's actions are not determined by external factors and are not a reaction to the actions and deeds of others, but flow from within them, from their fully free, autonomous choices. Thus, in Osho's conception, the spiritual transformation that takes place in the butterfly phase introduces the theme of freedom, which here has a spiritual character. As with the Stoics and other ancient wisdom currents, it means first and foremost the ability to understand the game that life in society represents and to distance oneself from it, to give up participation in it (Ibidem: 71). Although, being among people, the individual is subject to empirical influences and various influences from them, the individual is not in any way determined by them. Unlike the stage of the camel and the lion, the individual is not subject to external rules or ordinances which they should obey or might oppose (Osho 2008a: 255), and are therefore difficult to control effectively. Indeed, a person who is in the butterfly stage is highly conscious and possesses an inner self-discipline that does not flow from any external authority, but comes from genuine inner knowing. It is therefore spiritually independent, i.e. able to act consciously and thus responsibly (Ibidem; Osho 2008b: 91).

The definition of responsibility given by Osho is, just like Martin Buber's, rather general in nature (Hrehorowicz 2016: 66). It is a readiness to respond, to give an answer to what life brings (Osho 2007a: 221, 226–227; 2017b: 311; 2008b: 106). Such a response is at once source, spontaneous and a direct expression of consciousness, since it is not conditioned in any way: it is not dependent on past experiences and memories, it is not preceded by any a priori expectation, it does not stem from any predetermined concept, nor does it anticipate the future (Osho 2008b:106). Responsible, in Osho's terms, is therefore the one

who experiences what he is currently experiencing without judgement, acts without plan and without prejudice, assumes nothing in advance and lives without ideals (Ibidem; Cf. Hrehorowicz 2017: 263; 2021b: 44, 45). Such direct insight into the empirical concrete of life is devoid of ego particularism. In this way, the act that the individual undertakes constitutes a spontaneous, immediate response to the concrete, empirical situation in which the subject finds themselves.

Such spontaneity requires us to be very courageous in life, not planning anything, we do not know what will happen and what the future will bring. According to Osho, courage and freedom have certain characteristics in common, because freedom implies a choice that always involves risk, uncertainty, the need to go beyond the tried and tested way of understanding the world, and thus requires courage. Therefore, awareness, freedom and responsibility are, in his view, not only important factors for the process of human self-actualisation, but also in the way we live our lives, because they make the actions and choices of an individual completely unpredictable, since no one knows what will happen in the future (Osho 2008b: 102, 103, 105, 106). From this point of view, responsibility is something very personal, a manifestation of an entirely authentic existence.

Furthermore, Osho believes that one who affirms freedom sees his life as an uninterrupted adventure, a pilgrimage or a journey (Osho 2008a: 134), thanks to which existence acquires a new quality. This is because the individual at the third stage of their development treats freedom in a complementary manner, i.e., they are not only based on the intrinsic freedom of negation, but also possess the positive freedom of creation. Living as if they were on a journey, they remain in tune with the here and now. They have a direct insight into every situation they encounter, so they see things and issues as they are at that moment and in that place. Thanks to such heightened awareness, they do not have to decide, make choices or refer to top-down norms of right and wrong, but do what is right out of themselves. Therefore, by reading their own potential, the individual can determine their own life goals and express themselves in creative activity. This approach reconstitutes the identity of the individual, who is no longer entangled in either internal or external conflict. For while the Nietzschean man-camel has memory and the lion has knowledge, the child in Osho's

interpretation, like the person-butterfly, has their own wisdom (Osho 2008b: 92; 2008a: 255). In this wisdom the child realises that, unlike the camel and the lion, their existence is neither dependence nor radical independence, but is an interdependence (Osho 2008b: 91; 2008a: 254).

Interdependence is understood by Osho in the spirit of Far Eastern philosophy, as a consequence of his belief in the holistic structure of the world (Cf. Hrehorowicz 2021a: 157, 158). The essence of such interdependence is well illustrated by Diogenes of Sinope's assertion "All is in all and through all" (Cit. Per: Kerc 2021: 13), because it implies that in life everything depends on each other and that the individual is linked to nature and to everything that exists (Cf. Osho 2008a: 254; 2019a: 39; 2002: 22, 23; 2005: 38; 2006: 199). Although each of us has our own individuality, at the same time we are part of the whole universe. In the butterfly phase, man understands his individual life as organically intertwined with life in general (Osho 2008b: 91). Thus, by realising his development as fully and multilaterally as possible, he relates it to being in general, which results in a particular way of relating to other people and to himself. In this special relation to others, the readiness to assist the development of others is expressed. By actualising his or her potential consciously enough not to harm others around them, the butterfly-person not only takes care of themselves, but at the same time, by being 'by' someone, by being 'next to' someone, supports the self-realisation and empowerment of others. The limits of this assisting are not set by a system of ethical norms, but depend on the individual's personal attitude, empathy, compassion and responsibility. They emerge with transcending one's ego, which enables the individual to transcend the hitherto existing barrier between the 'self' and the external world, to open up more fully to the world and step out towards it, and to dismiss the temptation to reduce its otherness to that which corresponds to our conformist 'self'. Butterfly's responsibility, then, means being able to be 'by' someone, to be 'next to' someone, to establish a sincere contact with them that goes beyond the conventional, socially appropriate understanding of right and wrong. In this way, the butterfly-person gains a more authentic relation to values, and can therefore see, in a completely unprejudiced way, the inherent predispositions and possibilities of the other person. This takes place spontaneously, so to speak, as a result of the mere fact of being at an

advanced stage of self-actualisation of one's own potential, from which others can then draw, not as a result of conscious, intentional action. This is because, having reached a certain stage of advancement, the individual has upgraded their potential so far that they are able to altruistically and spontaneously share themselves with others, e.g. their compassion, empathy, and love. By stimulating their not fully upgraded potential, the individual becomes something of a master for them.

In addition, as soon as the particularistic ego disappears in the butterfly-person, the dualistic division into 'I' and 'you', strengthened at earlier stages of development, also disappears from their thinking (Ibidem: 91, 92). This in turn makes it possible to know things in a single moment, allows direct, comprehensive and unmediated cognition of things and the experience of reality happening *hic et nunc* as a unity (Osho 2008a: 259). Osho explains this process by introducing the concepts of the 'observer' and that which is 'observed'. An observer is the one who experiences a given thing in a state of passive, effortless awareness, and therefore without judgement, looking through the prism of one's memories or habits of thought (Osho 2020b: 84, 85, 86).

It is a kind of cognition that is mystical to a certain extent. For it is related to the realisation of the ultimate goal of the third phase of human development, which is the leap of consciousness from individual existence running through time into a state of pure presence, in which the influence of ego and mind ceases. As a result, cognition takes on the character of the aforementioned still, attentive perception, and the individual merges into the totality of being, which gives rise to a sense of harmony within oneself and the harmony of oneself and one's environment, as well as a deepened experience of existence as a whole. This is because a situation then occurs in which, according to Osho, there is a mutual inter-relation between the observer and that which is observed. The observer becomes one with that which is observed and experiences it fully (Osho 2008a: 259; 2017a: 215). Thus, the butterfly lives in the present, here and now, in the sense that it integrates with the ever-flowing existence, with the totality of being. By acting consciously and responsibly, it affirms life in all its fullness.

In summary, the transformations of the spirit as seen by Osho are closely linked to his concept of freedom and human self-realisation. The affirmation of freedom conceived in a complementary way, char-

acteristic of the third stage of human spiritual development, is of fundamental importance here. In outlining the importance of this kind of freedom for the spiritual development of the individual, Osho refers not only to Nietzsche's views from the work "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", but also to his other texts. I will now take a closer look at this issue.

## Trophies of liberty

According to Osho, life has no predetermined meaning and man is therefore free to shape his own destiny (Osho 2008a: 221, 227). Religions, on the other hand, for centuries were based on the opposite assumption: they claimed that life had a meaning that man could discover and arrange his life according to it. Religious people thus lived according to conventions, superstitions and therefore had a false sense of the meaning of life that religions gave them (Ibidem: 221).<sup>10</sup> The situation gradually began to change with the emergence of thinkers such as Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Marx and Freud, who, according to Osho, contributed with their analyses to the discovery of the true motives for belief in God, and thus led to the questioning of its validity, "with which they did mankind a great service" (Ibidem: 224). For this reason, Osho considers Nietzsche to be a "true prophet" (Ibidem: 221, 222, 224) of the present time. In order to better explain certain aspects of Osho's views on this issue, I will now quote a longer statement in which he interprets Nietzsche's understanding of the essence of religion:

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<sup>10</sup> It seems that Osho is misleading his listeners here because his statement is inaccurate. For he says that religions over the centuries have preached the 'meaning of life', when in fact they have rather preached that our lives have a purpose (e.g. salvation in Christianity). The concept of purpose (telos) has its origins in the metaphysics of Aristotle, who argued that every entity has an intrinsic purpose (it is 'for something'). This concept was taken over in the medieval period by Christian philosophy, whose representatives made a creative synthesis of Aristotle's thought and the truths revealed in Scripture. For example, in relation to Aristotle's view that the goal of human life is happiness, St Thomas Aquinas assumes that it is not temporal happiness but eternal happiness. Meanwhile, the notion of the meaning of life tends to derive from later philosophy, which rejects the rationalist paradigm that appeals to the notion of the objective nature of being and seeks to arbitrate the meaning of reality and even instrumentalise it to individual needs. The concept of meaning was readily used by Nietzsche, for example, but understood in a relativistic way – it is the individual himself who gives meaning to his existence and reality, thus creating values, entities, etc.

He [Nietzsche – note A.H.] claimed that God is the expression of a weakened will to live. When an individual or a whole community grows old, declines and approaches death, thoughts of God arise. Why? Because death is coming and has to be accepted somehow. Life slips away from us and there is nothing one can do about it, but at least one can come to terms with death. God is the trick to accepting death. Nietzsche believed that only those who have become weak are able to come to terms with death. He said that the very idea of God came from the female mind. In his view, Buddha and Christ were effeminate, too meek. They were people who accept defeat and did not fight to survive. And when a man stops fighting, he becomes religious. When he no longer desires power, he begins to shrink and die, he also begins to think about God. God is the opposite of life, and life is a quest for domination, a constant battle to be won. When people become too weak and cannot win, they feel defeated and become religious. Religion is defeatism (Ibidem: 223–224).

As can be inferred, Osho's interpretation of the notion of the 'will to live' is consistent with Nietzsche's, that is, taken as an instinct of self-preservation, a desire to survive, preserve and prolong existence (Galas 2018: 379). In addition, Osho analyses Nietzsche's famous claim of the death of God in a manner similar to the negative freedom 'from' as defined by Sartre, i.e. as the foundation of the individual's development and the possibility for the individual to achieve autonomy. This interpretation of Nietzsche's thesis on the death of God is to some extent in line with its contemporary reception. For example, Jaromir Brejdek, a researcher Nietzsche, has identified one aspect of the understanding of this thesis as maieutic nihilism (Brejdek 2014: 133). According to him, it is an attitude that enables a deeper understanding of freedom, which, in this interpretation, becomes a condition for becoming a mature human being. It is noteworthy that Osho in this case he does not precisely quote what Nietzsche actually said, who merely claimed that "God has died" (Nietzsche 2001: section: 108, 125, 343), while Osho uses the following phrase: "God has died and man is free" (Osho 2008b: 40; Cf. Osho 2008a: 131). This is emphasised in Skowron's analyses when he points out that "Sometimes Osho attributes sentences to Nietzsche that are only half text or quotation, and the other half is already an interpretation" (Skowron 2006: 4–5).

It should be noted, however, that this addition is not accidental. It helps to understand both how Osho interprets Nietzsche's views and

gives insight into certain important aspects of his own conception of freedom. Osho regarded Nietzsche as a “madman” having “brilliant flashes” (Osho 2020a: 168), while his statement on the death of God was not only extremely profound but also absolutely groundbreaking (Osho 2008b: 40; 2008a: 131), because, in his view, it highlights the most far-reaching contradiction between the traditional concept of God and human freedom (Osho 2008b: 40, 41; 2008a: 131, 132; 2020a: 169).<sup>11</sup>

Although Osho seems to fully share the Nietzschean critique of the hitherto existing idea of God, he believes that Nietzsche’s view of the issue is incomplete (Osho 2008b: 41; 2008a: 131). For there are religions in the world in which there is no God, something that Nietzsche, as a representative of Western philosophy, does not seem to have taken into account (Osho 2008b: 141; 2008a: 131, 132). Far Eastern beliefs such as Buddhism, Jainism and Taoism do reject the belief in a supreme being, but like all religions they are organised in nature. They therefore have temples, priests and religious leaders who keep people enslaved (Osho 2008a: 132). This is why, Osho argues that for man to become truly free, it is not enough just to announce the death of God; all organised religions must also disappear (Osho 2008b: 42, 43; 2008a: 132).

As it seems, Osho is committing a kind of simplification here, and perhaps even a misrepresentation, since, contrary to what claims, Nietzsche was aware of the fact that there are religions that are not based on the worship of a personal God, and he repeatedly commented on

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<sup>11</sup> According to Osho (Osho 2008b: 40–41), this contradiction is rooted in the very concept of God, which, as preached by Christian religions, implies the recognition of the objective existence of a God who is omnipotent and who at the same time created man. Since this is the case, man cannot be free because an omnipotent God can annihilate him at any time.

According to Osho, Nietzsche rejects God because, with him, man can only be a slave. It can be inferred from some of Osho’s statements on the subject that he sometimes interprets the Nietzschean thesis of the death of God in a literal way, as a metaphysical argument in favour of the view that God does not objectively exist (Osho 2008a: 131). It is worth noting that this statement by Nietzsche can also be seen in a slightly different way, for example, as a critique of certain cultural ideas and perceptions that were born in another epoch and which, in Nietzsche’s time, have become empty, contentless concepts, since the type of consciousness that produced them does not exist. They therefore demand to be re-evaluated, which is why Nietzsche proclaims that the (former) God has died (see Żelazny 2007). It is worth noting that in other statements by Osho, however, elements of an understanding of this thesis can be found, e.g. in terms of a critique of cultural ideas of God and divinity, which, for example, are contradictory or entail mutually exclusive implications (see Hrehorowicz 2021a: 146).



Buddha and Buddhism in his writings. Besides, Nietzsche does indeed often criticise religious worldviews, nevertheless he does not consider all religions to be of equal worth from the point of view of the individual's ability to achieve full autonomy. The object of his attacks is mainly the Jewish religion and the person of the Jewish priest, as well as Christianity, which is programmatically based on asceticism and the downplaying of the value of temporal life in favour of eternal life after death. Nietzsche advocates the replacement of these types of religiosity, which in his view are reactive, with a Dionysian worldview that is affirmative towards life. Buddhism, on the other hand, is according to him a relatively better religion, even if not as desirable as the Dionysian one due to the fact that Buddhists also preach the superiority of negation over affirmation, the illusiveness and necessity of the extinction of temporal desires, etc.

Referring to theses such as the famous Nietzschean saying "God is dead", proclaiming the death of religion, invoking the famous existentialist maxim that "existence precedes essence" or the Heideggerian concept of "resolution" (Osho 2008a: 226, 227). Osho aims to reveal the authentic nature of human existence, which he, like the existentialists, views in terms of freedom. In his view, this means that, having rejected organised religion and the moral principles associated with it, nothing really determines how we are to live and the individual must answer the question of who they are, give their life meaning and decide their own destiny entirely on their own (Ibidem).

However, "freedom from" conceived in this way has a very ambiguous character because, depending on how we use it, it can be both a source of liberation for the individual and a source of their downfall (Ibidem: 225).<sup>12</sup> Religions admittedly relied heavily on rigid orthodoxy

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<sup>12</sup> In justifying that achieving negative freedom alone may not be sufficient, Osho refers to Nietzsche's biography. In his view, Nietzsche was a "martyr" who, by rejecting religion, prepared a negative "freedom from", but did not reach the stage of positive "freedom to", which, according to the guru, could consist, for example, in meditation (Osho 2008a: 226). Moreover, Osho says that "Nietzsche died in an institution for the mentally ill, and if we clung to him, madness would await us" (Ibidem). This statement is obviously false. The truth is that Nietzsche's mental illness developed rapidly in 1888, with a consequent loss of situational discernment and contact with his surroundings. Until 1890, he actually stayed for treatment in a psychiatric clinic, first in Basel and then in Jena. In contrast, he spent the last three years of his life under the care of his sister Elisabeth Foerster-Nietzsche in a house she rented in Weimar, where he struggled with his illness without having any contact with the world.

and conventions that enslaved people, they defined at the same time what was good and what was bad, so that people saw the world as ordered and their lives as subordinated to clear values and therefore meaningful. Although these rules were often adopted somewhat unreflectively and by virtue of social convention from other people and did not, in the long run, free people from the anxiety felt underneath, they nevertheless offered a certain guarantee that, by observing them, they would not sink morally below the level of an animal (Ibidem: 133). After their rejection, the individual, left to their own devices, is free, but at the same time, loses the sense of their previous existence and may fall into emptiness or even madness (Ibidem: 225). This is why, Osho argues that we cannot stop at a mere critique of religion. The experience of a kind of agnosticism that arises in such a situation is therefore understood by him in the spirit of the Socratic “I know that I know nothing” (Ibidem). Our existence then once again becomes an enigma for us, a mystery to be discovered. What was blocked in us at the stage of the Nietzschean camel is unlocked, that is, the cognitive courage, the ability to affirm life, to give it meaning by ourselves as well as to develop and express ourselves comprehensively in creative activity. Agnosticism, in Osho’s terms, is thus something of a starting point for the possibility of moving to the stage of positive freedom ‘to’, where we gain the capacity to discover the unknown dimensions of existence and to act responsibly, and so reach the butterfly stage.

### **The idea of a superman**

Osho also refers to Nietzsche in other aspects of his thought. When asked by a student about the similarities between his vision of the ‘new man’ and the various versions of the idea of the superhuman that have appeared in the history of human thought, Osho notes that these are fundamentally different concepts (Osho 2020b: 115).

First of all, they have completely different origins. Osho analyses the origins of the concept of the superhuman in psychoanalytic terms, recognising that as early as childhood a person may experience an inferiority complex. This affects the individual’s emotions and his or her relationships with others, leading to a compensating sense of one’s own

inferiority by pursuing ambitions, seeking dominance and placing oneself above others. For Osho, the idea of the superhuman is a form of psychological projection by intellectuals, thinkers and revolutionaries who, unable to find relief from their feelings of powerlessness and inferiority, seek to satisfy their ambitions by creating a vision of an individual characterised by qualities diametrically opposed to those they themselves feel (Ibidem: 116). Osho recognises that Nietzsche's concept of the superhuman is also the result of such a way of dealing with an inferiority complex. As the cause of this complex in Nietzsche, Osho points to the relationship the philosopher had with Richard Wagner, who was much older than he was, and with a wife (Cosima – note A.H.), who was more than twenty years younger than her husband. According to him, Nietzsche was platonically in love with Cosima (Ibidem). However, when he confessed his feelings to her, she treated him ruthlessly, proving to him that he was no match for her husband's spirituality, charisma or musical talent (Ibidem: 117). As a result, Nietzsche suffered a mental breakdown. He developed a strong inferiority complex, which affected all his further philosophical work, characterised by a "great hatred of women and all manifestations of femininity" (Ibidem). According to Osho, soon after the incident described, Nietzsche left the city for the mountains. He began to write critically about Wagner, and introduced the category of the 'superman' into his philosophy, the source of which was his rejection of love, empathy, compassion, qualities embodied by the figures he criticised: Jesus and Buddha.

It is worth noting that in his statements, Osho here admittedly gives actual events from Nietzsche's biography, such as his friendship with Wagner, its break-up or Nietzsche's criticism of the composer. From the analyses of Nietzsche's letters to Cosima, it can be inferred that he also correctly interprets the motives of his platonic love for Wagner's wife (Kuderowicz 1976: 18). However, his interpretation of the reasons for Wagner's Nietzschean critique and the genesis of the Nietzschean idea of the superman is rather speculative.<sup>13</sup> In addition, there is here

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<sup>13</sup> Wagner's criticism is also the subject of analyses by professional scholars analysing Nietzsche's philosophy. However, they give completely different reasons for Nietzsche's break with Wagner than those mentioned by Osho, see, e.g. Kuderowicz 1976: 24–25. Kuderowicz also points out that Nietzsche himself repeatedly takes up this theme in his works, e.g. in the preface to "Human, All Too Human", where he ac-

a certain inconsistency of thought on Osho's part. For it is clear from his argument that all ideas of the superman (including the Nietzschean one) as a manifestation of the inferiority complex of their creators arise at the camel and the lion stages, phases which, according to Osho, signify an over-identification of the individual with their own mind. The inferiority complex is essentially an action of the ego, and the ego is part of the mind. Moreover, all mental action takes place in time: the judgements and decisions of the individual who acts caused by the complex derive from the past, which, as it were, paralyses the present. Nevertheless, Osho sees the Nietzschean superman in terms of a spiritual transformation and the final phase of individual development. It consists in the attainment of the highest development of consciousness, which, according to what Nietzsche himself writes, becomes pure, innocent and liberated from what he describes as the 'spirit of gravity', i.e. from its own past (Nietzsche 2006: 221–222). The individual who has become superhuman has re-evaluated, has overcome the self. As a result, the individual is incapable of identifying with their own past, which can therefore no longer determine their present and future actions. The Nietzschean idea of the superman therefore has nothing to do with the past and with any of its elements, such as, for example, the inferiority complex mentioned by Osho. For the superhuman is a gift, the result of a decision, a free choice. However, although Osho's opinions quoted above may at first suggest that he is not well acquainted with the Nietzschean concept of the superhuman, this is not true, since in his commentary to "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" he explains the essence of the idea of the superhuman in a very Nietzschean spirit, in line with its contemporary reception (Osho 2007b: 36–37). Once again, various aporias and contradictions are revealed in Osho's views on interpreting Nietzsche. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly a fact that Osho rejects the ideas of the superman. For, as conditioned by the inferiority complex of their creators, they are, for him, ideological in nature and are therefore 'rubbish', as they prevent man from living in harmony with his true nature and discovering its uniqueness (Osho 2020b: 137).

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cuses Wagner of rejecting the autonomy of art in favour of religion, or in "The Case of Wagner" (*Der Fall Wagner*), published in 1888, or in the text entitled "Nietzsche contra Wagner", published in 1895. See *ibidem*: 23.

## Conclusions

The analyses carried out confirm that, in Osho's thought, we are not dealing with a systematic reception of Nietzsche's philosophy, but rather with a rather arbitrary approaching of certain themes or motifs referring to it, which are presented from the author's point of view. Therefore, his interpretations of various ideas or metaphorical formulations appearing in Nietzsche's writings (such as God is dead) are often of a rather arbitrary nature and do not always take into account a good knowledge of the context from which these concepts originate (such as Greek culture, Christian doctrine and Schopenhauer's philosophy or the social and intellectual climate of 18th and 19th-century Germany).

Therefore, Osho's views on Nietzsche, are neither highly original nor particularly profound. Some of them are admittedly in line with what established scholars of his philosophy say about Nietzsche. This may also be due to the fact that Osho never studied Nietzsche's work reliably and simply did not know certain aspects of it. This conclusion is completely in line with what Michael Skowron writes on this subject in his text. He points out that in Osho's statements, in addition to well-founded theses that are supported by the source texts, we also find misrepresentations of biographical facts, erroneous and false views as well as pure speculation. We find, for example, erroneous or misleading statements by Osho, such as that Nietzsche wrote "The Antichrist" in an insane asylum or that Hitler took the idea of the superman from Nietzsche. We also find inconsistencies and contradictions in his interpretation of the German philosopher's views, for example when, on the one hand, he says that Nietzsche does not speak directly of the historical Zarathustra and uses this figure in a symbolic way to express his views, and then speaks as if Nietzsche's Zarathustra and the original Zarathustra – are the same.

In conclusion, Osho's interpretations add little that is new to the current state of research on Nietzsche's thought. Moreover, due to the fact that Osho tends to mix Nietzsche's theses with his own ideas in them, they may prevent a reliable understanding of the German philosopher's views and may even be misleading as to what he actually claimed as well as create a simplified picture of his thought. Although,

therefore, we are not dealing here with some very systematic account or good knowledge of Nietzsche, his influence and the inspiration of his philosophy are clearly visible in Osho's work (e.g. the theme of the three transformations or the death of God in the concept of individual self-development). Therefore, they may be of interest to those who are concerned either with the thought of Osho himself or, for example, with the relationship of contemporary Far Eastern thought to the Western philosophical tradition, but provided that they take the trouble to verify Osho's statements in source texts and scholarly studies on Nietzsche's work.

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