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THE MEANING OF THE CONCEPT OF LOVE ACCORDING TO SHREE RAJNEESH (OSHO)

Znaczenie pojęcia miłości w ujęciu Shree Rajneesh (Osho)

Słowa kluczowe: Osho, miłość, akceptacja,
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Streszczenie

Artykuł składa się z dwóch części. Pierwsza część koncentruje się na krytyce powszechnych, lecz według Osho fałszywych pojęć miłości, które prowadzą do jej błędnego postrzegania i stanowią przeszkody w duchowym rozwoju. Druga część zgłębia istotę prawdziwej miłości w ujęciu Osho, podkreślając jej głębokie, „źródłowe” aspekty oraz znaczenie w procesie duchowego rozwoju jednostki. Poprzez tę analizę artykuł dąży do uzupełnienia luki w badaniach nad myślą Osho, oferując nową perspektywę jego nauczania o miłości.

Abstract

The article consists of two parts. The first part focuses on a critique of the common, but according to Osho false, notions of love that lead to its misperception and are obstacles to spiritual development. The second part explores the essence of true love as perceived by Osho, highlighting its deep, ‘source’ aspects and its importance in the individual’s spiritual development process. Through this analysis, the article seeks to fill the gap in research on Osho’s thought, offering a new perspective on his teaching on love.

Introduction

Questions about the essence of love, such as “What is love? How is it to be understood?” have continuously occupied thinkers from ancient times to the present day. Despite the widespread interest in this issue, no unambiguous definition of love has so far been achieved. On the contrary, there is a wide variety of definitions, concepts and approaches to this experience.

One concept of love, based on a unique perspective of human nature, was developed by Shree Rajneesh (1931–1990), also known as Osho, the influential and controversial guru and philosopher of the second half of the 20th century. Osho distinguishes between a superficial, conditional ‘love’ and a deeper form of it, which plays a crucial role in human life.

According to Osho, superficial love is limited by external attributes and conditions, making it apparent. In contrast, true love transcends superficial emotions and selfish desires, accentuating its integrity. Such love is unconditional, embracing all aspects of being, including spiritual growth, self-exploration, self-acceptance and authentic connection with the other person. Experiencing such love requires a realistic recognition of human nature, which allows one to understand the differences between false and true love as well as to identify its meaning in human life and to pursue spiritual growth.

Although Osho’s reflections on love play a central role in his thought and teaching, they have so far not received a comprehensive reconstruction by other authors. Consequently, there is an important gap in the study of his thought. Given the importance that Osho attributes to love in the context of spiritual development and self-realisation, it is worth undertaking a detailed analysis and reconstruction of his concepts. The purpose of this article is therefore to analyse Osho’s approach to love and to show how his reflections in this regard can contribute to a deeper understanding of love as an essential element of spiritual development.

The article consists of two parts. The first part focuses on a critique of the common, but according to Osho false, notions of love that lead to its misperception and are obstacles to spiritual development. The second part explores the essence of true love as perceived by Osho, highlighting its deep, ‘source’ aspects and its importance in the individual’s spiritual development process. Through this analysis, the article seeks to fill the gap in research on Osho’s thought, offering a new perspective on his teaching on love.

False notions of love

Osho’s analysis of the nature of love sheds light on the significant difficulties in understanding and defining it within a social context. His reflections provide a critique of prevailing views and common mis-

understandings about love, emphasising the need to move from a superficial perception to a deep understanding of its essence. Osho points out that the concept of 'love' encompasses a diverse range of emotions, relationships and behaviours that are often treated as contradictory. For example, love can be equated with both altruism and generosity, as well as jealousy or the desire to possess and control another person. This observation implies the need for an in-depth analysis of the meanings attributed to it, going beyond stereotypical depictions.

In his reasoning, Osho identifies three erroneous perspectives on love prevalent in culture. His first critique concerns the view of love as infatuation, or object-oriented affection, which is based on fascination or attraction to a person's physical or external characteristics, such as appearance or behaviour (Osho 2011b: 222). Osho defines this love as 'instinctive' (Ibidem: 59), 'ordinary' or 'erotic' (Ibidem: 102, 222), arguing that such a perspective is reductive and focuses on the physical aspects of being. It leads to a focus on subjective sensations and hedonistic pleasures, ignoring the depth of the spiritual dimension, which is essential for the attainment of full development and higher states of consciousness.

Osho's anthropological assumptions of an integral, holistic view of the human being underlie this critique. According to these assumptions, a man is a being in which the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual spheres are intimately connected. A holistic view of the human being forms the basis for an understanding of love. It is crucial for a realistic recognition of human nature. Only through such recognition can the differences between infatuation and love be properly understood and holistic, integrated development be pursued. Osho believes that true love encompasses all aspects of being. Infatuation, due to its reductionist nature, hinders this.

Infatuation is often associated with strong but short-lived sexual desire. Sex resulting from desire is experienced only on a physiological level. According to Osho, this is limiting and primitive (Osho 2011a: 225), as it does not take into account the full potential of this energy. Osho believes that the energy of human life, finding its outlet in sex,¹ is the fundamental source of vitality and dynamism (Osho 2011a: 7, 21).

¹ It should be clarified that, according to Osho, the energy in the human being is one and neutral, and that names such as 'sexual energy', for example, derive from the forms in which this energy manifests itself (Rajneesh 1979: 21).

Sexual energy, considered in the context of a holistic view of the human being, affects all aspects of life. This includes the survival of the species as well as creativity and spiritual development. In this context, sex is not only a physical act for Osho. It is also a tool for personal growth, an opportunity for self-expression and a way of connecting with another person on an emotional and spiritual level.

Osho emphasises that true fulfilment and spiritual development can only be achieved when sexual energy is transformed into higher levels of consciousness. Sex on the physical level is only one of many possible experiences. People who stop at this level will never get the full spectrum of benefits. Transforming sexual energy into higher forms of love and consciousness leads to a deeper understanding of oneself and the other person, enabling inner integrity and wholeness of life. Meditation plays a key role here. According to Osho, it opens the individual to an understanding and acceptance of sexuality. In this way, we do not reject or suppress this energy, but integrate and transform it. Cleansed of cultural conditioning and desire, sexuality becomes a conscious form of energy that can lead to deep transformation and enlightenment (Ibidem: 114).

However, the model of love reduced to lust, which Osho criticises, does not allow people to fully understand the function of sex or to enter into its spiritual dimension. Osho addresses the ethical and emotional implications of such 'love', pointing out that it reduces the other person to the role of an object. It then underestimates her value and dignity. Referring to Martin Buber's concept of the 'I-Thou' relationship (Osho 2011b: 226),² Osho illustrates how limited and superficial love is based on the selfish satisfaction of one's own needs. It treats the other person merely as a means to an end. Such an approach objectifies the other person and is detrimental to the relationship. This is because it pre-

² It is worth noting that Osho, by focusing on the criticism of possession of the other and its negative impact on the soul, refers to Buber's central message of an authentic human relationship based on mutual respect and dialogue (Buber 1937). However, Osho's interpretation may differ from Buber's more classical or literal interpretations, as Osho often presents his own, often controversial, perspectives on various philosophical and life issues. Therefore, assessing the accuracy of Osho's interpretation of Buber's thought can be a matter of debate. Osho tries to convey Buber's deeper message of respect and authenticity in relationships, but his own approach to the subject may introduce new interpretative aspects and considerations that may be seen as innovative or controversial in the context of the traditional interpretation of Buber's philosophy.

vents one from truly getting to know the other person, developing the capacity to care for their well-being (Ibidem: 66).³ Osho portrays desire-based love as dominated by pragmatism and selfishness, where personal satisfaction is the main goal. According to him, such an approach is morally reprehensible (Ibidem: 65). Reduces human value to the role of a tool to achieve selfish ends, opposing the ethical imperative to treat people as ends in themselves.

Osho also criticises the dominant perception of love, which is often equated with the need to possess the other person or the requirement for their continued exclusivity (Osho 2015: 129).⁴ According to him, such an approach leads to jealousy, which he defines as an emotional state resulting from the fear of losing a loved one to another (Ibidem).⁵ Jealousy reflects deeper internal problems such as lack of self-accept-

³ Osho is also critical of the view propounded by people who have been emotionally wounded by others, claiming that 'love hurts'. According to him, there is a misunderstanding here related to the lack of distinction between desire, which is mistaken for love, and true love. Osho explains that when actions are driven by desire, the emotions and well-being of the other person are often ignored. If a person is used solely to satisfy someone else's desires, they may feel neglected, unappreciated and misunderstood on a deeper, emotional level. Such a situation leads to hurt because there is a lack of genuine care, respect and deep emotional connection, which are indispensable elements of healthy and mutually supportive relationships. Therefore, according to Osho, lust is a cause of hurt because it focuses on personal gain and gratification without regard for the emotional cost to the other person. Ultimately, this approach to relationships can lead to disappointment, conflict and deep emotional wounds. In contrast, unlike lust, true love does not hurt but enriches, because the one who loves treats the other person as an end in itself (Osho 2011b: 65, 102).

⁴ According to the presented views, love should not be perceived solely through the lens of exclusivity with a beloved person. Such a perspective is illusory and based on unrealistic anthropological assumptions, as it ignores the need to maintain a balance between commitment and space for oneself. In a healthy relationship, love engages emotionally and energetically, which can lead to exhaustion. Therefore, it is crucial to skillfully balance closeness with independent rest, which does not indicate coldness or rejection but rather the necessity for regeneration and internal renewal. Such rest allows for the recovery of the energy and passion necessary for renewed, creative, and enthusiastic expression of feelings (Osho 2015: 173).

⁵ In the context of Osho's critique of distorted perceptions of love, it is important to highlight his stance on the expectation of absolute fidelity. He defines this expectation as a prohibition against thinking or dreaming about another person in the context of desire or sexuality (Osho 2010: 220). According to Osho, such an approach stems from a misguided anthropology, making it unrealistic. He also emphasizes that a lack of understanding of natural psychological processes leads to unreasonable demands. These, in turn, can cause conflicts between partners and foster suspicion, which may escalate into possessiveness (Ibidem).

ance, low self-esteem, fear of rejection and loneliness. It is also an attempt to control the other person in order to satisfy these fears.

In light of this psychological interpretation of jealousy, Osho argues that love and jealousy are contradictory states and cannot coexist in the human psyche (Osho 2010: 234–236). Jealousy transforms love into a relationship based on possession and control, which is in opposition to its authentic nature. True love, according to Osho, is characterised by acceptance, inner peace and altruism (Osho 2011b: 68). A genuinely loving person strives for their partner's happiness and fulfilment, even if this means accepting their happiness with someone else (Ibidem: 128).

Osho's critique of false love is also based on the assumption of an inseparable link between love and freedom, which he sees as fundamental to human nature and necessary for a full and authentic life (Osho 1995: 62; 2011b: 52, 101; 2017: 70). He compares this relationship to a bird whose one wing is love and the other is freedom – both are necessary for it to fly (Osho 2011b: 101). In this perspective, true love not only does not limit freedom, but actually promotes it, allowing the loved person to be themselves and express themselves without fear of judgement or rejection (Osho 2010: 237; 2011b: 101).

Osho emphasises that jealousy not only threatens the freedom of the other person, but also represents a serious obstacle to the spiritual development of both the individual and their partner. Jealousy, being a manifestation of the need to dominate and control, leads to actions that limit the space for the other person's personal development, which is contrary to the essence of true love. Instead of supporting the partner in their quest for wholeness, jealousy draws attention to fears and anxieties about the future, which distracts us from the present – the only moment in which we can fully love and be present (Osho 2011b: 101).

Actions resulting from jealousy, such as frequent quarrels, mistrust or constant questioning of a partner's feelings, lead to an infringement of their freedom and their right to personal happiness. The restriction of this freedom blocks the spiritual development of both the jealous person and their partner. As a result, instead of building a relationship based on love, jealousy leads to a depreciation of the partner's values, which can result in an erosion of authenticity and interest in the relationship.

Osho also notes that the dynamics of jealousy can lead to toxic relationships, where the pursuit of dominance results in an overly submis-

sive partner. In particular, an analysis of male-female relationships reveals that male submissiveness resulting from attempts to avoid conflict often leads to a depreciation of their value in the eyes of their female partners, further exacerbating relationship problems (Ibidem: 66).

In summary, Osho shows how unconscious mechanisms can negatively affect relationships, with important implications at both the individual and social level. His analysis of the conflict between love and jealousy has both a psychological and ontological dimension, demonstrating a quest for a deeper understanding of the human experience. Osho's teachings combine psychological introspection with a reflection on being and existence, presenting love as a key element of human life. True love is based on acceptance, freedom and trust, which contradicts the common belief that love and jealousy can coexist. Modern people find it difficult to separate these two states, leading to superficial and false relationships. Osho stresses that this approach harms both the jealous person and the object of jealousy, leading to fear, insincerity and suffering. It is necessary to reformulate our understanding of love and jealousy in order to have healthy and authentic relationships.

Finally, Osho also criticises the perception of love as an expression of need arising from a sense of lack and dependence. According to him, such 'love' comes from an individual's inner sense of incompleteness. Such a person longs to relate and be loved, seeking confirmation of his or her worth in others (Osho 1999b: 51; 2010: 37, 42). Osho compares this behaviour to the attitude of a beggar, which emphasises the conditional nature of the feelings in such an approach (Osho 1999b: 56; 2002: 53; 2010: 43; 2011b: 102; 2013: 67). He calls this 'need-love' or 'deficiency-love', referring to the terminology used by C. S. Lewis and Abraham Maslow (Osho 1999b: 50; 2010: 37).⁶ He argues that most of society misunderstands the essence of love, based on an incorrect anthropological assumption.

According to Osho's philosophy, true love has a different source – it comes from inner wholeness and emotional self-sufficiency. This feeling does not stem from the fulfilment of external expectations and is

⁶ It is worth noting that Osho aptly refers to the terminology used by these thinkers. Lewis uses the term 'need-love' in his work "The Four Loves". 'Need-love' refers to love based on the need a person feels for another person to satisfy their deficiencies. Maslow, on the other hand, uses the term 'deficiency-love' in his work "Toward a Psychology of Being". This is love based on the need to fill inner deficiencies.

not oriented towards taking, but is a manifestation of the natural capacity to love as a being of human existence (Osho 1999b: 52; 2010: 39, 42; 2017: 91). Love understood in this way is the selfless sharing of self with others (Osho 1999b: 51, 56; 2010: 38, 39, 42).

As Osho notes, modern understanding of love often stems from emotional deficits and inner emptiness. Those affected by these deficits may subconsciously seek partners with similar deficits. Such dynamics usually stem from a deep desire for understanding and acceptance (Osho 1999b: 59). They count on their partner to satisfy their unfulfilled emotional needs. However, hopes that the relationship will fill a life void and bring happiness are illusory. A relationship based on the need to fulfil certain conditions and the associated expectations inevitably leads to limitations imposed by the partner. People with low self-esteem often transform such relationships into a kind of ‘psychological bondage’ (Osho 2004: 69). This bondage, stemming from subconscious needs and fears, creates ideal conditions for the emergence of mechanisms of domination and control.⁷ In such relationships, domination and control become the main mechanisms of interaction, which Osho compares to a ‘guard and prisoner’ relationship (Osho 2004: 70). Manipulation and attempts at domination often stem from a desire to reverse disadvantageous situations, such as financial dependency, where one party attempts to dominate the other (Osho 2010: 39, 40; 2011b: 67–68). Such actions contribute to the deepening of the cycle of mutual dependence and psychological oppression.

In the context of these transformations, the relentless pursuit of perfection proves to be equally destructive.⁸ Often one party imposes

⁷ As previously mentioned in the context of the analysis, true love must support the freedom of the individuals involved. It is worth emphasizing once again that, for Osho, love and freedom are inseparable, like two sides of the same coin (Osho 2010: 303). Reiterating this concept underscores its importance in the context of dominance and control, which are discussed in this part of the study. According to Osho, if control and restriction of freedom dominate a relationship, it is not true love. Such behaviors often mask other, less desirable motives, such as seeking security or fulfilling unmet needs (Ibidem). Consequently, relationships that may seem based on love may, in reality, be hidden forms of psychological dominance and dependency.

⁸ This approach is flawed at its very foundation, as it is based more on selfish premises than on solid anthropological knowledge. Osho assumes that humans, like any other living beings, are fragile entities, whose lives can be compared to a thin thread, easily broken. Human needs, desires, and longings are inherent weaknesses of human nature, stemming from the fact that humans are not made of steel (Osho

this aspiration on the other. In such an arrangement, feelings become self-interested and have to be earned. The strength of the feelings depends on the extent to which one party subscribes to or adapts to the other's ideas (Osho 2017: 69, 70). 'Love' then becomes a tool of manipulation or a reward for fulfilling expectations. Osho argues that this approach leads to constant dissatisfaction and lack of fulfilment, as pleasing others at the expense of one's own needs becomes the priority. The person tries to meet endless expectations, which ultimately leads to increasing tension and problems in the relationship, as each fulfilled expectation generates another.

A person who makes endless demands is often unable to respect the other person as an independent individual. This leads to fear and insecurity and creates an atmosphere of fear, which, according to Osho, is the opposite of love (Ibidem: 67, 68, 79; 1995: 28). In response, the other person tries to live up to expectations, which leads to hypocrisy and internal conflicts, compromising the authenticity of the relationship. The falsity of such an attitude deprives the relationship of trust, sincerity and emotional closeness. Osho defines such closeness as the process of revealing ourselves to someone who was previously a stranger to us (Osho 2013: 7). It allows them to get to know and understand us. Proximity is about discarding masks and defensive barriers, enabling sincere, intimate and emotional contact with the other person.

Failures in striving for perfection lead to increasing frustration and tension in the relationship. The tensions can escalate into open hostility, whether one-sided or mutual (Osho 2004: 71). In such cases, distorted perceptions of love result in feelings of betrayal unhappiness on both sides, often leading to the breakdown of the relationship. The partners, blaming each other, perceive the other person as the main cause of the failed and toxic relationship.

The above analysis leads to the conclusion that Osho formulates his judgements about false love on the basis of his observation of the dominant patterns of human relationships in society and anthropological analysis. His critique is based on a deep understanding of human nature, which integrates the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual spheres. Through this holistic perspective, Osho identifies various er-

2013: 10). The expectation of achieving perfection, that is, the complete elimination of these weaknesses, is a fundamental anthropological error, ignoring the essence of the human condition.

roneous approaches to love that reduce it to superficial or selfish forms, ignoring its deeper, spiritual aspects.

Osho's views on false models of love are justified both within the context of his teachings and contemporary scientific research. Psychology and sociology confirm that relationships based solely on physical attraction, emotional dependence, or the need for possession are unstable and can lead to emotional problems. Theories such as John Bowlby's attachment theory or Erich Fromm's concepts, also emphasize the importance of authentic, selfless love for mental health and personal development.

Love as a state of being, not a relationship

Osho opposes relationships that are toxic and inhibit spiritual development, but he does not reject the value of love and living together (Osho 2004: 75–76). On the contrary, he considers them essential for harmonious spiritual development and the full realisation of each person's natural potential. In healthy relationships, according to Osho, individuals accept the impermanence of life, which grants them the freedom to either stay together or part ways. For him love is a 'state of integrated consciousness' (Osho 1995: 28; 2002: 44, 48, 61, 62; 2004: 68; 2011b: 51, 193; 2011a: 90; 2013: 66; 2017: 79, 91). It is rooted in human nature and does not arise from any particular person or external circumstances. Osho emphasizes that such love transcends the dualistic limitations of traditional 'I–Thou' relationships as described by Buber (Osho 2011b: 226; Cf. Osho 2017: 79), meaning it exists independently of relationships with others. It is a capacity for love in general, not merely a reaction to a specific individual (Osho 2002: 63). Osho, drawing on Lewis's terminology, refers to it as 'gift-love' and, following Maslow, describes it as 'being-love' (Osho 1999b: 50; 2010: 37).⁹

The love that emerges from this, according to Osho, enables unconditional loving, which, much like in Fromm's concept, is not confined

⁹ Osho aptly refers to the terminology used by Lewis and Maslow. Lewis uses the term 'gift-love' in "The Four Loves", where he distinguishes between different types of love, including 'affection', 'friendship', 'eros' and 'charity'. In the context of love-agape, Lewis refers to gift-love as selfless, sacrificial love that is directed towards the welfare of others rather than one's own needs. Maslow uses the term 'being-love' in his work on self-actualisation and the hierarchy of needs.

solely to close relationships¹⁰ but extends to encompass all humanity, as well as the animal and plant kingdoms (Osho 2002: 9; 2011b: 225; 2011a: 88–89). This universal love becomes a powerful force, permeating all aspects of life and leading to profound spiritual transformation. It is a continuous and dynamic love, standing in stark contrast to limited and static relationships (Osho 2002: 55; 2010: 81; 2011b: 194).

I believe that practising transcendental love not only towards a partner, but also towards a variety of life forms and a wider range of people can enrich society and promote greater harmony. Eliminating the division between ‘I’ and ‘you’ can reduce conflict as well as stereotypes and prejudices. When people see each other as part of one whole, it is easier for them to find common solutions and compromises. This leads to more peaceful coexistence and fewer disputes, both on an individual and social level. In my opinion, transcendental love increases the sense of community. A society in which individuals see each other as part of one whole becomes more integrated and communal. People feel more responsible for each other, which leads to better cooperation and mutual support. Seeing that everyone is a part of a greater whole makes people more tolerant and accepting towards diversity. Transcendental love helps to eliminate prejudice and discrimination, leading to a more equal and just society.

When we treat love as a manifestation of an inner state of being, it becomes a kind of energy capable of growth and expansion. Such love opens the way to a fuller experience. It becomes a tool for spiritual as well as emotional evolution. Osho describes love as a kind of energy to be expressed in conscious actions, and therefore freely. Internally fulfilled people do not keep this energy to themselves. They let it flow towards others, sharing it unconditionally and spontaneously (Osho 2002: 2, 44; 2013: 149). Fromm’s view of love is similar. He believes

¹⁰ Fromm emphasises that love is a fundamental, active force. It transcends personal boundaries and touches the essence of common human experience. He also points to love’s potential for personal and social transformation (Fromm 1956: 24–25). Osho criticises the cultural promotion of the idea of limiting love to a relationship with one person or a narrow group of close people. According to him, this approach is the result of the influence of religions promoting the idea of monogamous marriage (Osho 2002: 150–151). Conditioning by this idea for many centuries has led people to focus on ‘loving’ one particular person or a narrow circle of close people. This limits the acquisition of valuable inner experiences that can contribute to personal growth and deeper self-understanding.

that the act of selfless giving is the essence of love. Fromm emphasises that giving does not mean depriving oneself of something. It is an expression of fullness and inner richness. The process of giving brings joy and satisfaction. It also brings acceptance for both the giver and the recipient (Fromm 1956).

For Osho, giving becomes pure and unconditional. It is free from the desire for approval (Osho 2002: 2, 3; 2011b: 67). Osho compares such people to 'emperors' (Osho 2011b: 102). Emperors do not expect their selflessness to be reciprocated (Osho 1999b: 51, 53; 2002: 53). Sharing themselves is a source of joy for them. It makes them more internally integrated and harmonious (Osho 2011b: 110–111). Similarly, Fromm notes that true happiness and wholeness is found in selfless giving. This is the foundation of healthy and deep love.

Essential aspects of love

While emphasising the importance of selfless sharing, Osho also points to other fundamental aspects of love, understood as a manifestation of an inner state of being. Among these he includes acceptance, freedom, empathy, creativity, courage and joy. In his view, each of these elements is a manifestation of love in its purest form, unrelated to the conventional notion of relationship. These aspects of love, considered as basic types of experience, enable a deeper understanding of love as an all-pervasive and all-encompassing force.

The first and most important source of love according to Osho is self-acceptance. This process involves rejecting unrealistic and idealised images of oneself, ceasing to compare oneself to these images and accepting all aspects of oneself (Rajneesh 1979: 94, 95). Self-acceptance implies a state of complete satisfaction with who we are, without the need to change to something inauthentic.

Osho emphasises that self-acceptance leads to a transformation that arises from our own nature and not from external pressures or expectations. Through self-acceptance we reduce inner conflict, which is often the result of trying to conform to social expectations or external pressure.

When we stop judging ourselves and following external role models and instead accept our true self, we begin to act in accordance with our own needs. Then we can realise our life goals based on our unique

potential and values. This leads to inner integrity and coherence in our actions and decisions. This way of development is natural and authentic. It allows us to realise our full potential and achieve inner completeness.

From an anthropological perspective, Osho's position finds justification in the assumption that each person is unique and incomparable to others.¹¹ According to him, people possess an innate uniqueness that cannot be reduced or compared to other individuals (Osho 2013: 99, 125). This uniqueness is a fundamental feature of each person's being. Therefore, self-acceptance is a key element of development and self-realisation.

Given the above considerations, it is worth discussing the practical implications of this philosophy. Self-acceptance is the foundation of self-love and has concrete implications for our daily lives. Self-love includes taking care of emotional, physical and mental needs. It manifests itself in self-care and respect for one's feelings, emotions and moods – in a nutshell, in full respect for one's own soul.

Self-acceptance leads to authenticity. Being authentic means being true and honest with ourselves and others. When we accept ourselves, we stop hiding our true self. We are accompanied by the courage to be ourselves, which strengthens our resistance to external opinions and criticism. As a result, we do not change our behaviour just to gain the approval of others. It allows us to be ourselves in different situations.

Authenticity fosters further development. We become more open and honest in our relationships with others. This, in turn, allows us to experience life 'here and now' and to make deep, authentic connections with other people.

Osho points to the fundamental role of self-love and self-acceptance in relationships with other people. He argues that building a healthy relationship with oneself and developing self-acceptance, self-love and

¹¹ Osho's statement about the uniqueness and exceptionality of each individual reflects an anthropological assumption close to personalism (in a sense, Osho's view also resonates with existentialism, especially in its affirmation of the individual uniqueness and unique nature of human existence. Philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Søren Kierkegaard emphasised the uniqueness of the individual and his unique existential experience). The philosophy of personalism emphasises the uniqueness, irreplaceability and unsurpassable value of each human individual. This is central to both personalism and humanism. In an anthropological context, Osho articulates a personalist model in which each person is seen as unique, unrepeatable and possessing an inalienable dignity.

self-confidence are necessary steps to be able to bestow these values on other people (Osho 1995: 42; 2002: 7, 8, 9, 10, 28; 2007: 150). This enables us to form authentic, stable and healthy relationships with them. Osho emphasises that everything starts with ourselves. Our inner mindset, attitudes and feelings determine the quality of our relationships with others. The changes we want to see in the external world must first occur within ourselves.

By accepting our own flaws, strengths, limitations and unique characteristics, we become more open to accepting the same aspects in other people. Understanding and accepting ourselves allows us to be less judgmental and more understanding towards others. In this way, the relationship becomes more genuine and sincere, as both parties can be themselves without the fear of rejection.

Confidence in ourselves is the key to building trust in other people. When we trust our decisions, intuition and skills, we are more confident in dealing with potential difficulties. By doing so, we eliminate fear and uncertainty, creating space for true understanding. This leads to a sense of security, deeper trust, openness and closeness between partners.

The experience of love according to Osho also defines freedom. A loving person is someone who has rejected his or her ego and the desire for competition, as well as the suppression of emotions under the influence of the opinions and expectations of those around him or her. The rejection of the ego occurs through deep insight into oneself and the discovery of one's essence. This leads to becoming aware of one's own worth. Hence, a loving person is free from fear and uncertainty about the future and the outcome of their feelings. Such a person does not calculate gains and losses, because their love is authentic and not based on conditions. This enables him or her to live life to the fullest, focusing on the present (Osho 2017: 82).

Understanding oneself also breeds respect for the other person's individuality. According to Osho, such a person is seen as an end in themselves and not as a means to achieve his own ambitions. This respect makes it possible to open up to the other person and accept their freedom, without fear of loss or rejection. Such a person does not try to appropriate the partner's freedom or make him or her dependent, avoiding domination, manipulation and control.

The relationship with the partner is then not threatened by the attention the partner receives from others. On the contrary, such attention becomes a source of joy and pride. The lack of need to control the partner fosters trust and respect for the partner's autonomy, which in turn deepens emotional connection and intimacy. Recognition of the partner by others can revitalise feelings and encourage rediscovery of the partner.

This person does not fear the departure of their partner because their fulfilment and happiness comes from within, regardless of the presence of their partner. The person understands that the partner has their own feelings and a need for spiritual growth and self-realisation. Therefore, he or she creates a space where the partner can fully develop their natural potential.

Another key aspect of love is empathy. Osho defines empathy as the ability to deeply understand and empathise with other people. Empathy is not just about understanding the emotions of others, but about actually feeling what they are experiencing (Osho 1990: 23; 1991: 39, 55). To achieve authentic empathy, according to Osho, one must, through meditation, abandon one's own prejudices and open oneself to the experiences of others (Osho 1990: 78; 1991: 112). This process begins with self-acceptance and self-love. When we accept ourselves, we become more open and sensitive to other people's feelings. Empathy then involves a genuine interest in and concern for the welfare of the other person, which transcends the boundaries of selfish desires and leads to a deeper understanding of human nature. This understanding, in turn, makes it possible to care for the well-being of the other person while respecting their freedom. Osho emphasises the deep connection between empathy and freedom as fundamental aspects of love. Understanding this connection requires the acceptance that everyone is entitled to their own decisions and choices, even if they seem wrong from our perspective. A loving person accepts the choices of others, even if they differ from their own desires or opinions. The person is prepared to accept the rejection of their help. This is a sign of emotional maturity and an understanding that respect for the other person is more important than the desire to help (Osho 2016: 135, 137). If someone does not want to be helped, they should not be forced to do so. According to Osho, rescuing someone against their will is not a genuine act

of helping, but a form of domination. Help should only be offered when it is needed and accepted. Imposing help can be seen as an attempt to control, rather than authentic support.

Empathy, in Osho's terms, is inextricably linked to the process of spiritual awakening and self-realisation. An empathic person is able to be present with another person in their difficult moments, without judging or trying to fix their life for them. According to Osho, empathy is a deep understanding of the other person and their situation that allows one to provide appropriate help without resorting to pity or condescension. An empathic person, in his or her view, supports others in a way that enhances their self-reliance and development, rather than bailing them out or undermining their ability to act independently. This happens mainly through witnessing one's own attitude, which can inspire and stimulate the process of self-discovery, empowering the other person and helping them to find their own solutions.

Another aspect of love according to Osho is creativity. This is the inner power that drives a person to express themselves creatively. When a person loves, they feel the need to create – they may sing, paint, write poems, play the guitar or engage in other creative activities (Osho 2017: 73). Through creative activities, they manifest their unique nature and individuality. Creativity becomes a natural manifestation of self-realisation because it is an expression of who we really are.

Love is therefore, at its core, creative and transformational. It is the source from which human creativity flows, providing a vehicle for personal growth and transformation. It inspires not only the creation of new works and artistic forms, but also the enrichment of the human experience through everyday actions.

Osho emphasises that even the simplest everyday activities, such as cooking, sweeping or talking, can be creative if performed with love, awareness and full commitment (Osho 1999a: 10, 12, 25, 27, 40, 75; 2010: 25). This approach makes each activity unique and meaningful, transforming ordinary actions into acts of creativity.

An analysis of the concept of love according to Osho reveals that love is not only a feeling, but also a key element of spiritual awakening and self-realisation. This process begins with self-acceptance. It leads to the full development of the individual's potential. This creates authentic, stable and healthy relationships with others. In this way, love

becomes the driving force for spiritual and emotional growth. It leads to the achievement of inner integrity and wholeness of life.

Conclusion

Osho analyses the issue of love in the context of interpersonal relationships and spiritual development, emphasising its complexity and multifaceted nature. According to him, love is not only an inner state, but is also expressed in concrete actions, emotions and attitudes. This perspective allows us to better understand that love is a phenomenon that can be both observed and experienced in interpersonal relationships. These relationships go beyond traditionally understood relationships. Love creates a dynamic and constantly evolving relationship. At the same time, it is a spiritual experience, resulting from the development of the individual's consciousness. In this view, love is a key element of human existence. It can be nurtured and developed independently of external conditions or interpersonal relationships. Love is not a one-time event, but a permanent presence in the life of the individual, which can be systematically developed.

Osho's reflections interestingly present the diverse, often subtle and complex qualities of love. At the same time, he avoids the cheap sentimentalism and superficial emotionality that can easily accompany this subject. He criticises traditional, limiting models of love, proposing instead a kind of love that is unconditional and free of selfish desires. He is particularly apt at highlighting the natural relationship between love and freedom. He points out the crucial role of freedom from egoism and the desire to possess the other person. Love based on freedom allows partners to be authentic, self-fulfilled and to grow personally.

Osho criticises relationships that limit the individuality of the partners. He points out that such relationships lead to domination and control. He promotes the idea of interdependence, where partners retain their individuality. At the same time, they support each other in the pursuit of authenticity and personal growth. This approach differs from more traditional models of love, which may focus on the unity and fusion of the partners' personalities.

In further research, it is worth examining more broadly how love and freedom support each other. It is also important to explore how

their absence can lead to destructive relationships. Furthermore, it is important to discuss how practising interdependent love can change social dynamics on a wider scale. This can reduce conflicts and promote a more integrated society. These reflections can make an important contribution to philosophical and psychological discussions on the nature of love and interpersonal relationships.

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