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# STUDIA ECOLOGIAE ET BIOETHICAE



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## Human Self-Experience in the Garden: Horticulture from an Ontological-Axiological Perspective

### Samodoświadczenie człowieka w ogrodzie: hortikuloterapia w ujęciu ontologiczno-aksjologicznym

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**Abstract:** The intensively developing horticultural therapy proves the healing power of human contact with nature. This article analyses the process of self-therapy taking place in contact between a person and a garden both as its guest (passive horticultural therapy mode) and as its host (active horticultural therapy mode). It has been established that passive and active horticultural therapy includes activities involving the physical (sensations), mental (cognition), emotional (affections) and spiritual (reflections) spheres, which have been distinguished as internal human activities, while active garden therapy additionally involves the functional sphere as its external activity. Exposure to sensory stimuli initiates changes in a person's cognitive, emotional and spiritual sensitivity, leading to self-cognition. At this stage, it is possible to switch from the identity of the visitor in the garden (performer of the action) to the identity of its host (perpetrator of the act). At this level, when creating a garden, a person experiences the values of freedom, goodness and beauty, which leads to self-transformation through self-experience. Changes taking place in a person may, in turn, translate into his horticultural activity. The ontological and axiological description proposed in the article aims to include the way of thinking derived from the Polish philosophical tradition into the international eco-pedagogical discourse.

**Keywords:** horticultural therapy, garden, self-experience, activity, ontology, axiology

**Streszczenie:** Intensywnie rozwijająca się hortikuloterapia dowodzi uzdrawiającej mocy kontaktu człowieka z naturą. W artykule dokonano analizy procesu autoterapii zachodzącego w kontakcie człowieka z ogrodem zarówno jako jego gościem (tryb pasywnej hortikuloterapii), jak i gospodarzem (tryb aktywnej hortikuloterapii). Ustalono, że bierna i czynna hortikuloterapia obejmuje czynności angażujące sferę fizyczną (doznania), umysłową (poznanie), emocjonalną (uczucia) i duchową (refleksje), które zostały wyróżnione jako wewnętrzne czynności człowieka, podczas gdy czynna hortikuloterapia dodatkowo obejmuje sferę funkcjonalną jako aktywność zewnętrzną człowieka. Ekspozycja na bodźce zmysłowe inicjuje zmiany w zakresie wrażliwości poznawczej, emocjonalnej i duchowej człowieka, prowadząc do samopoznania. Na tym etapie możliwa jest zmiana tożsamości gościa w ogrodzie (wykonawcy czynności) na tożsamość jego gospodarza (sprawcy czynu). Na tym poziomie, tworząc ogród, człowiek doświadcza wartości wolności, dobra i piękna, co prowadzi do jego przemiany na drodze samodoświadczenia. Zmiany zachodzące w człowieku mogą z kolei przełożyć się na jego działalność ogrodniczą. Zaproponowany w artykule opis ontologiczny i aksjologiczny ma na celu włączenie sposobu myślenia wywodzącego się z polskiej tradycji filozoficznej do międzynarodowego dyskursu ekopedagogicznego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** hortikuloterapia, ogród, samodoświadczenie, aktywność, ontologia, aksjologia

## Introduction

The increasingly intensively developing horticultural therapy, otherwise known as hotritherapy or horticultural therapy (Latin *hortus* – garden), proves the healing power of contact between humans and nature. The American Horticultural Therapy Association (Diehl 2007) recognizes hortitherapy as a method that, through passive or active involvement in activities related to the garden, improves the patient's well-being. Garden therapy is based on the assumption that nature has a positive impact on humans and responds to their needs.

In the article we analyse the process of self-therapy<sup>1</sup> through contact with the garden. Therefore, the following should be considered: human – contact – garden, as an ontological relationship, which in fact is the main subject of our research. The phenomenon of the garden is the fact that it is a place created by someone and for someone. And this very act of human creation is an introduction to experiencing the ontological and axiological dependence that occurs between human freedom and the value of goodness and beauty. The person-creating and sense-creating experiences that accompany it, which are in fact the experience of this dependence (stretched on the triad: freedom – goodness – beauty), we will call self-experience (experiencing oneself by man), and the creation of the garden is internal and external activity that can trigger this dependence. Being in the field of self-experience, we experience deepened mindfulness and awareness of why and where we are. It is a garden – a special place that we can quite precisely distinguish from the surrounding space-time<sup>2</sup>. In other words,

the human knows (and also experiences that he knows) that he is in the garden and not just in the open air. Hence the need to call the experience of oneself in the garden as a horticultherapeutic self-experience and to undertake a detailed analysis of this healing phenomenon for the body and spirit. We have no doubts that in the case of a person and his humanity, the garden is both literally treated as a place subject to human care and the care of one's own interior, as an axiological garden (axiosphere of one's own existence).

In this article, we have analysed the process of self-therapy taking place in the contact of a human with the garden as its guest and as its host. As a starting point, we took the commonly used division of horticultural therapy into its passive and active form. In this context, we decided to pose many important – in our opinion – problematic questions about the person being and acting in the garden:

- How does the process of becoming a gardener proceed from the performer of the activity to the perpetrator of the act of caring for nature and oneself?
- What is its therapeutic value?
- How is the dynamism of a human experiencing active and passive horticulture manifested?
- What are the relationships and directions of influence between them?
- How does the garden affect a human in the process of self-perception and self-experience?

The ontological and axiological description proposed in the article aims to include in the international eco-pedagogical discourse the way of thinking derived from Polish philosophical tradition, reaching back to the classics of anthropology, which sees both the *compositum humanum* and the *conditio humani*. This double perspective allows us to analyse both “how a person acts” and “what then happens in him and with him”. (Wojtyła 1969; Starnawski 2020;

<sup>1</sup> Autotherapy is understood as independent actions taken by a person in order to satisfy their own conscious or unconscious needs in terms of functioning, health or well-being in general.

<sup>2</sup> The oldest etymological dictionary of the Polish language defines “garden” as a fenced-off place, close to the concept of homestead. In this sense, the gardener is a person staying in a fenced off place (Brückner 1927).

2011; Tischner 1998a; 1998b; 1993; Pala 2019; Paluch 2020).

### **1. The gardener - the performer of the action or the perpetrator of the act?**

The starting point for this text is the commonly used division of horticultural therapy into its passive and active forms. In the first case – passive being in the garden, we describe a human at the level of skills typical of his species: looking, walking, grasping, feeling, tasting, hearing and mentally analysing. They happen naturally and sometimes even unconsciously. At this level, a person is only a certain performer of activities, often conditioned by his biological happening. For example: I see a bumblebee on a leaf of watered marigold – I move my hand away. We would like to point out, however, that I also undertake the watering activity as its contractor, only if, when I see a dried flower bed I automatically reach for a watering can (we will return to this example later). In the second case, – being active in the garden – we describe a human being at the level of his acts of causation (and not just skills). A person who becomes a doer replaces the performance of an action with an act (Latin *actus*). It is this type of action and happening that presupposes the experience of freedom to act and act for good. In such a conscious and experienced internal activity – the ontological dependence of freedom on goodness – the perpetrator performs the work of creation (Latin *creatio Dei*), makes the garden a place of transcendent self-experience. In the field of horticultural therapeutic self-experience – as the perpetrator of the act – we experience one more important value. It is the experience of responsibility, understood as the experience of moral obligation towards the object of our creation or care. It consists in entrusting him with the fullness of our presence, guaranteeing that my “I am” will be authentic, listened to and discerning. In Polish, this concept has its meaning-forming basis in the word *odpowiedź* (Eng. answer), which

can be resolved in two ways: by answering “for” a place, situation, person, one’s own words and decisions, and by responding “to” the presence of another living being (human, animal, plant) in the field of our self-experience. We have no doubts that the person taking care of the garden covers both dimensions of responsibility with his/her external and internal activity (by giving the answer “for” and “to”). It is a self-experience by a human being of another being (plant, animal), which – let us note – also has a certain specific field of experiencing himself and others.

### **2. Being in the garden - passivity and activity**

In horticultural therapy, the process of active or passive use of the natural qualities of the garden is consciously initiated and supervised for the purpose of enhancing the health and mental well-being of a human being. Horticultural therapy in its passive form is focused on close, attentive, but passive contact with nature. In this approach, a human is part of the existing ecosystem, experiences and contemplates it, but does not create, transform or nurture it. He revels in the found natural form and looks for content in it, existing at the activity (not acting) level. It focuses on sensory experiences, observation and moderate physical activity, relaxation, recreation and regeneration. Passive horticulture therapy is dedicated to therapeutic gardens deliberately designed to maximize sensual and aesthetic experiences: smells, tastes, sounds, colours, contrasts, various patterns and textures. They will include: viewpoints, usable lawns, sensory paths, ponds, watercourses and fountains. In its advanced form, passive horticultural therapy may consist only in observing nature from the hospital window or plants placed by the patient’s bed.

Active horticultural therapy comes down to active gardening, i.e., direct human participation in gardening works, such as: garden design and planning of gardening works, sowing, planting, weeding, fertilizing,



watering, pruning, plant propagation, collecting leaves, crops, mulching, creating and maintaining elements of small architecture. This is accompanied by the increased dynamism of human action and development (Latin *praxis*). In its active form, horticultural therapy also includes off-season work, such as planning plantings, cleaning and sharpening tools, covering plants for the winter. However, active horticultural therapy is not only extensive gardening work. In the case of bedridden patients, it may involve filling a pot brought to their bed with soil, sowing seeds, watering and observing the process of plant growth in which they played an active role. Patients then experience a deep sense of becoming the perpetrators of the act (deed) of caring for a particular plant, which translates into the awareness of caring for life in themselves, but also in the world. Active presence in the garden is related not only to the purposefulness of actions, but also to the agency of its deepened existential sense, cooperation with nature and participation in the processes taking place in it.

The passive or active form of horticultural therapy is determined not so much by the activity of the human staying in the garden as by his participation in creating the garden. Here, the fact of the ontological dependence of the garden on the human should be emphasized (a garden does not create itself) and remind of the aforementioned axiological dependence of freedom

on goodness and beauty. A gardener feels fulfilled when, through the act of nurturing (care) he also achieves the fullness of aesthetic expression. Walking around the garden, and even practicing sports in it, although physically activating, but without participating in gardening work, will be a manifestation of passive horticultural therapy. Active horticultural therapy, on the other hand, assumes human involvement in the co-creation and care of the garden, i.e., composing its form and content, and at the same time its own internal content. In practice, however, these two forms of garden therapy are not always inseparable, because a passive attitude in the garden can lead to an active attitude.

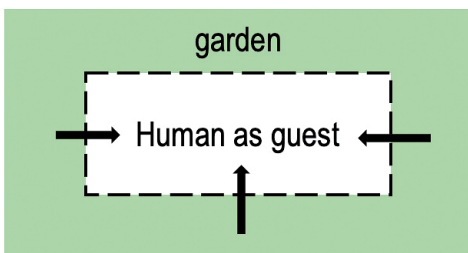
### 3. The direction of therapeutic intensification - from passivity to activity

Man experiences nature both in the passive and active form of horticultural therapy, with the latter also being experienced by man. In passive horticultural therapy, therefore, the relationship between the human and nature is one-sided, in active – bilateral.

Internal activity, characteristic of passive horticultural therapy, is aimed at processing at the cognitive, emotional and spiritual level of sensory stimuli and multisensory experiences generated by the horticultural environment. Outdoor activity, in turn, is focused on activities in the garden related mainly to physical work, usually preceded by

#### Passive horticultural therapy

Unilateral relationship



#### Active horticultural therapy

Bilateral relationship

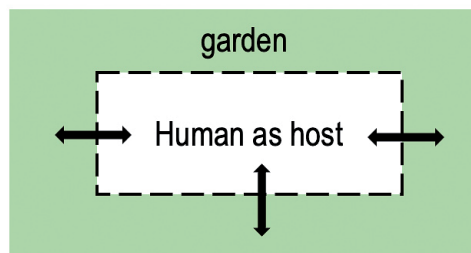


Figure 1. The garden in relation to the human as guest and human as host in the context of active and passive horticultural therapy

conceptual work. Therefore, internal activity can become a contribution to involvement in gardening work, lead from the position of a guest in the garden to the role of a gardener – host. Active gardening, related to transforming the structure of the garden and influencing the processes taking place in it, will strengthen the exposure to sensory, cognitive, emotional and spiritual experiences. In passive horticultural therapy, the therapeutic value will be in the garden as a place, in active horticultural therapy – gardening as a human activity and the development of the garden.

The external activity of the human in the garden, associated primarily with the active form of horticultural therapy, is focused on transforming the garden, the internal – on the transformation of the person himself, which takes place both during his passive and active presence in the garden, and therefore can be combined with horticultural therapy both passive and active (Fig. 2). However, there is a difference in the intensity of participation in one's own humanity. In the case of passive horticultural therapy, we experience ourselves at the somatic level – focusing on what is happening to us and inside us (relaxation, regeneration, recreation). Thanks to this – in the act of self-perception – there are moments of identification of changes taking place in the body: I rested, I feel better, I gained new strength, It was what I needed. On the other hand, in active horticultural therapy, this “happening” of a human takes place in the act of transcendence – crossing the existing boundaries of oneself – towards the identification of autotelic values: freedom, goodness and beauty. The identity of the perpetrator of the act develops (not the happening itself, but the fully attentive and causative action). Thanks to this – in the act of self-experience of the fullness of one's own humanity – there are moments of its integration with the world of nature: I am not alone, I co-create the world, I care for every existence, I express myself through silence.

And here we return to the example of watering a bed with marigold and the presence of a field bumblebee. If earlier we decided that withdrawing the hand from the insect (in order to avoid a possible bite and disturbing the collection of nectar) takes place at the passive level, i.e., the passive performer of watering the flower bed, now let us find the perpetrator of the act in this action. Because if the meeting with the bumblebee is preceded by a kind of anticipation subjected to the awareness of the beauty of this moment, and at the same time the ephemeral nature of life as a good in itself, then the trivial act of watering the bed at the level of a passive performer may cause the experience of oneself as the creator of something unique – a place of life for another species. And so, the identity of the gardener passes from the state of external passive activity to the state of internally active activity.

In Fig. 2 shows that nature affects the internal activity of man, which can lead to external activity, which in turn affects nature itself. Nature is not able to stimulate a person to horticultural activity in a direct way, but it will work through the ontological dependence of freedom, goodness and beauty experienced by man, motivating him “from the inside” to work in the garden. The work of a human in the garden will not have a fully therapeutic value if he does not remain in this internal (co)relation with nature, which does not flow through him, transforming him and encouraging him to adopt an active attitude in the garden. In this arrangement, gardening works will not have a therapeutic, but performance-instrumental character.

As mentioned, in passive horticultural therapy, the garden is a place where a human is exposed to nature, while in active horticultural therapy, nature itself is transformed by man. The gardener is a creator who will, on the one hand, respect the processes taking place in it, and on the other hand, compose its structure, giving it a specific shape. He will cooperate with it and at the same time counteract what he considers undesirable

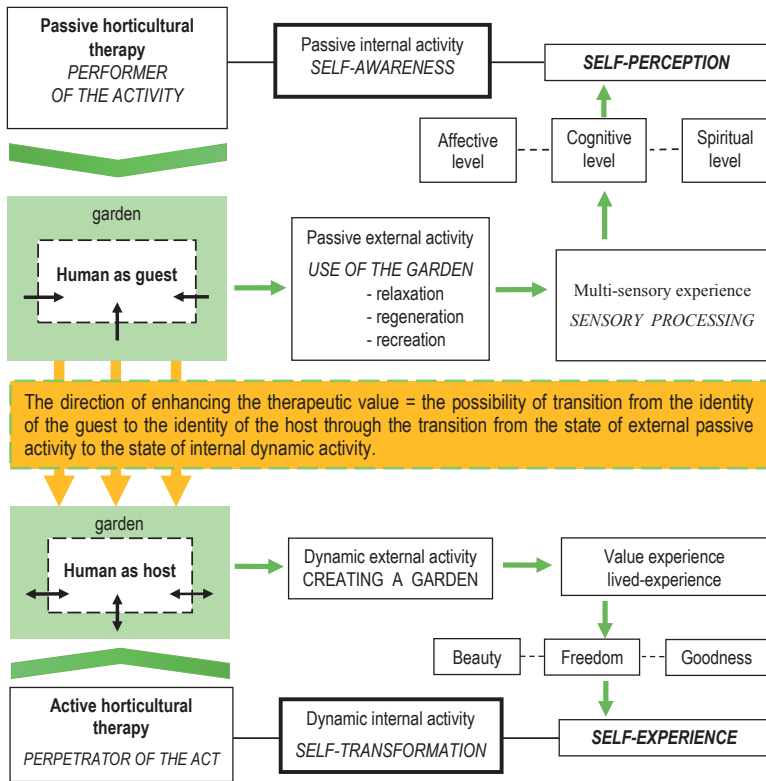


Figure 2. The process of becoming a gardener from the performer of the activity (guest in the garden) to the perpetrator of the act (host in the garden), in the context of the therapeutic value of self-perception and self-experience

and eluding his aesthetic sensitivity and inner freedom. It is a form of confrontation between the freedom of nature, which masters a given habitat through the process of ecological succession, with the freedom of human nature to create a garden according to one’s own vision. The garden is the result of the “peace processes” that result from this confrontation, from which both natures come out victorious.

A garden, understood as an ecosystem structure (biocenosis plus biotope), generates sensations registered through human sensory channels, which in turn triggers its cognitive, emotional and contemplative activity, leading as a result to transformations in the components of his inner life. Internal changes taking place in a person under the influence of his passive stay in the garden may lead to taking active gardening activities, i.e., participation in creating

the garden. Transformations in terms of its appearance will consequently affect qualitative and/or quantitative changes in the sphere of possible sensory stimuli. The structure of man’s internal and external activity in the garden, leading from exposure to sensations, through cognition, experiencing and contemplating to active action, is embedded in the process of changes taking place both in the person himself as well as in the garden where he stays and works.

#### 4. The garden as a place of self-perception and self-experience

##### 4.1. Garden of Sensations

The English word “sense” means the ability to perceive through the sense organs, thanks to which it is possible to react to an external or internal stimulus. All stimuli that reach a person from the outside pass through

sensory channels. There is no other way to learn about the world than to see, hear, touch, smell or taste.

Among therapeutic gardens, sensory gardens are one of the most popular. Although their name would indicate that they stimulate all the senses of visitors, in practice they focus mainly on visual aspects, so the presence in the garden is usually limited to passive observation and contemplation. And yet the garden is not only to be admired, it is also a place where sounds, smells, flavours are present, grasslands encouraging to walk barefoot, sloping tree branches to climb, watercourses to wet your hands and the aforementioned supply of water to flowerbeds. In active horticultural therapy there are also such behind-the-scenes sensations as effort, the smell of compost or freshly dug earth, there is a feeling of sweat and dirt. The sensory garden is not only a floral decorative part, but also a usable part, full of fruit and vegetables, ensuring their direct consumption. Sensory exploration of the garden takes place in its structure that triggers individual sensory impressions, but on a time continuum, e.g., related to the time of day (e.g., a garden smells differently in the morning, differently in the evening, differently on a sunny day, differently just after rain) or seasonality (a garden with different times of the year).

#### 4.2. Garden of Cognition

The garden stimulates not only the senses, but also cognitive processes. The biblical concept of the garden as a place of knowledge is still valid. According to the Dictionary of the Polish Language (*"poznawac"*, n.d.), "to know" means to experience, acquire information, understand it and learn. Cognition is closely related to experiencing as a process of acquiring knowledge and skills through action, watching or feeling ("experience", n.d.), while, as in cognition, the two-track experience is characteristic here – it is direct observation or participation in events as the basis of knowledge, but also a fact or state of being influenced by

the knowledge gained through direct observation or participation ("experience", n.d.). Friedrich W. Froebel (Froebel 1896), the creator of the pedagogy known from "Froebel's gardens", understood this dynamism of cognition and experience in the learning process as human development taking place in the process of becoming what is internal – external, and what is external – internal. Froebel recommended that in teaching a child, the powers of his head, hands and heart should be integrated, which can be understood as involving the mental, physical and affective spheres in the education process, as well as the functional sphere, according to the assumption that the child should gain as many new experiences in contact with nature as possible, but it is best for him to act and come to knowledge on his own. The teacher plays the role of a gardener who takes care of the child like a plant, i.e., creates conditions for optimal development and eliminates destructive factors.

The very idea of incorporating gardens into campuses (garden-based learning) is not new, since the 1990s there has been a sharp increase in interest in the use of garden based education around the world (Williams 2018). The same is happening in Poland, by restoring the idea of establishing "Jordan gardens"<sup>3</sup> in cities, as well as kindergarten and school gardens.

#### 4.3. Garden of Affections

The garden itself can be a work of art, and gardening can be an art. According to the painting theories of gardens, its space should be composed like a painting, which is achieved by the use of e.g. contrast, symmetry, symbolism based on allusion and metaphor (Kaczmarczyk 2011). The garden, however, is not a work that can be completely finished, it is always in the process of growth, maturation and rest. Just following the vegetation process in the garden

<sup>3</sup> This tradition in Poland dates back to the pre-war period and is associated with the figure of Henryk Jordan (1842 – 1907), a doctor, social worker, pioneer of physical education.



from soil preparation through planting, growth to harvest, its circadian rhythm and cyclical variability gives a sense of responsibility and fulfilment (Tse 2010), purpose and stability (Hale et al. 2011), satisfaction and hope (Okvat and Zautra 2011).

The garden is not an emotionally indifferent place. The garden is calming, but also arouses emotions. For example, admiration is associated with feelings of wonder and aesthetic pleasure. Just being in the garden improves the mood (Cordoza et al. 2018). Research (Korpela, Klemetilä, and Hietanen 2002; Schultz and Tabanico 2007) indicates that indirect and even subliminal exposure to the natural environment can trigger a significant positive affective response. Close contact with the elements of the natural environment can bring a strong feeling of happiness and inner peace. The results of the measurements carried out confirm the fairly common belief that people are much happier outdoors in all types of green or natural habitats than in urban environments (MacKerron and Mourato 2013).

Attempts have even been made to estimate a measure of the proportion between vegetation and hard man-made landscape that would have a therapeutic advantage. The ratio is believed to be at least 70% lush garden and at most 30% hard ground (Marcus 2008). However, as it turns out, the therapeutic effect depends on the time of exposure and the place of exposure. For example, it has been calculated that 2 hours of gardening activity produces the best psychological effects in terms of mood improvement (Hayashi et al. 2008).

Properly designed garden surroundings can influence the modulation of stress, and thus have a therapeutic value. Both active and passive gardening is conducive to relaxation. Just a walk in the garden is associated with a decrease in depression symptoms and a higher percentage of positive-emotion word use over time (McCaffrey et al. 2011). In addition to relieving stress (Rodiek 2002), the garden is a place to escape from work or everyday problems, inspire motivation,

improve self-esteem, sense of identity and fulfilment (Gross and Lane 2007; Freeman et al. 2012; Matsuo 1995).

#### 4.4. Garden of Reflections

According to the Dictionary of the Polish Language (*refleksja*, n.d.), “reflection” is “deeper thinking about something, caused by a strong experience” or in philosophical terms, “the thinking subject’s turning towards his own activity”. In Polish, we additionally distinguish the category of *zreflektowanie* (not present in English), which means a significant change in thinking and acting on the basis of an ethical decision of the current conduct. The therapeutic advantage of *zreflektowanie* over *refleksja* is that it is accompanied by the “healing power of guilt” (Paluch and Tempczyk-Nagórka 2022) and justified embarrassment, which in turn triggers the will to change and even to make amends. While reflection comes to a person, often involuntarily or in the mode of a kind of enlightenment, *zreflektowanie* requires “contemplation” – immersion in thought, looking at something with concentration.

The word “contemplate” comes from the Latin *templum*, meaning “place of observation”. To contemplate is to consider something with constant attention, to meditate (“contemplate”, n.d.). The garden, in addition to the sensory dimension affecting the corporeality, the cognitive dimension involving the mind and the emotional dimension, also has a metaphysical and philosophical, mystical and spiritual value. Engaged presence in the garden, based on intense mindfulness, encourages contemplation and reflection, discovering what a person experiences, thinks, and feels, also in the context of guilt for the current – often thoughtless – exploitation of the world. Staying and acting in the space of nature makes you think about the passing of time, stimulates you to draw conclusions from the past and make plans for the future (Myszka et al. 2022).

The garden is full of symbolism and metaphors, starting with the similarities between

botanical and human life: plants and people grow, age, die, bloom, suffer damage, survive. Gardening terminology and expressions from everyday life are also similar, such as: mother earth, cultivate your garden, sow the seeds, put down roots, bloom, dig something.

In both Eastern and Western traditions, gardens have always been spiritual places (Cunningham 1996). Various gardens: kitchen-gardens, formal, classical, English, Japanese or naturalistic – all of them carry a specific content through their form: philosophical, metaphysical, spiritual. The gardens of the French Renaissance in their formal structure were supposed to be a symbol of man's domination of nature (Francis and Hester 1990). They were designed with symmetry and almost mathematical accuracy. They demonstrate durability, faith in the absolute and universal principles and law (Miller 1993).

Natural gardens, designed intuitively and picturesquely, imitating the natural landscape, are meant to symbolize change and impermanence. A certain exception are Japanese Zen gardens, which, although they seem informal and imitate the landscape, are in fact very orderly in the sense of far-reaching, precise control over the location and growth of plants. They are intended not so much for walking as for viewing from a privileged place, similarly to formal gardens, preferably above ground level, which would suggest a transcendent position. These gardens symbolize timelessness and rejection of the temporal (Miller 1993).

Symbolism and narratives are very densely inscribed in the space of Persian gardens, based on the Zoroastrian division of the universe into four directions, four seasons or four elements. The Persian garden manifests the highest values and ideas, it combines two worlds: matter and meaning. The use of geometry is intended to show the union of the mortal/material world and the eternal universe. Water, as a sacred element of the garden, was located in the form of a vast pond or pool in the front part

of the pavilion so as to reflect the image of the building and the sky connecting the earthly and heavenly realms. The ancient Islamic gardens were designed based on a spiritual concept of the world and are intended to strengthen the relationship between the visitor and God (Mahmoudi Farahani, Motamed, and Jamei 2016).

It seems that the spiritual dimension of the garden has always been close to man. In contemporary Polish pedagogical thought, we find the ethos of Eden in terms of returning to the sources of nature, including human nature (Paluch 2021; Śliwowski and Paluch 2021). In pagan beliefs, sacred gardens were places of worship. In later times, a permanent element of the garden was the so-called temples of reflection, somewhat secluded places conducive to reflection and contemplation. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the garden of Eden, as a particularly separate part of the created world, was a sanctuary of God Himself. The gardens created by human effort were an attempt to recreate the biblical Eden, an expression of longing for a lost paradise. Reflecting human spirituality, monastery gardens were supposed to foster contemplation and prayer, which was served, among others, by the presence in the garden of figures of saints or specific plants symbolizing specific virtues, e.g., lilies (purity, innocence, virginity), roses (love paid for with suffering), violets (humility and modesty). Orchids in Chinese gardens, cedars in Persian gardens and cherry blossoms in Japanese gardens are similarly symbolic.

#### 4.5. Garden of transcendence

Experiencing oneself in the garden as the perpetrator of an act (host, gardener) may go beyond just experiencing the effort of physical or intellectual work and the related emotions. It brings to the repertoire of sensations the awareness of touching autotelic values – in themselves, and thus remaining within its reach, but not forever and not exclusively. These are the values of freedom, goodness and beauty. At the same time,

experiencing these values becomes proof of another value given to a person through them. It is the truth about the human as a transcendental being – capable of crossing his own cognitive boundaries and achieving a state of being in unity with the world. The garden as a place co-created by a human meets this criterion of being in the truth about the world existing outside the person and at the same time existing thanks to man. To define a garden, one needs a reliable, attentive, confident (not to be confused with self-confidence) but non-conflicting man, existing outside the essentially human manner of domination and appropriation. The garden becomes a medium in man's participation in his own humanity, measured by his attentiveness, tenderness and care, and at the same time mediates in the experience of the universe. Therefore, we consider transcendental gardens as states of experiencing oneself in relation to the surrounding world and within the universe. They can take the form of the aforementioned contact with a small flowerbed in the vastness of a large garden, as well as the retreat of the last touches of life accompanying the passing of a human being.

## Conclusion

In the horticultural therapeutic approach, the structure of the garden, which is in a continuous process of maturation, sequential vegetation and seasonal change, includes a human with his physical, mental, emotional or spiritual structure, in his life and growth cycle. In English, "cultivate" means "to prepare land and grow crops on it", but also "to try to develop and improve something" (cultivate n.d.). In this sense, horticultural therapy works in two ways: it focuses on cultivating the garden, being at the same time a source of achieving a person-creating goal – "cultivating" the person himself by stimulating him to develop, grow, but also readiness for ethical conversion in the process of his life.

This text deals with the issue of internal and external human activities in the garden

as a place of therapeutic value. They were considered in terms of ontological and axiological relations between the human and the garden, as its passive user, reducing his activity to performing simple activities, and as a gardener, the perpetrator of the act of creating the garden and himself. It was established that passive and active horticultural therapy include activities involving the physical (sensations), mental (cognition), emotional (affections), spiritual (reflections), which were distinguished as internal human activities, while active horticultural therapy additionally engages the functional sphere (action as creating a garden) as its external activity. Exposure to sensory stimuli initiates changes in a person's cognitive, emotional and spiritual sensitivity, leading to self-cognition. At this stage, there is a possibility of transition from the identity of the guest in the garden (performer of the action) to the identity of its host (perpetrator of the act). At this level, when creating a garden, a human experiences the values of freedom, goodness and beauty, which leads to self-transformation through self-experience. Changes taking place in a person may, in turn, translate into his horticultural activity and the transformation of the garden itself. In this approach, being the host in the garden means being the initiator of this circular transformation. The article points to the close relationship between man and the garden, in which he is the user and/or creator, having a broadly understood therapeutic value in terms of treatment, but also development.

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