

Cultivation of Allotment Gardens in Midlife: Interpretation of the Survey from the Axiological Perspective

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ABSTRACT:

Background: The article discusses issues related to the values of users of allotment gardens. Data analysis was carried out in accordance with the axiological perspective.

Materials and Methods: The study involved 140 respondents aged 50 years or older. The research tool was the authors questionnaire. The study was carried out using field research.

Results: Axiological pluralism manifests itself in the respondents motives for using allotment gardens. In the axiological analysis, based on the reference point, the respondents values were divided into three groups, namely, values related to: 1. contact with nature, 2. contact with others, and 3. oneself. Next, it was found that the three-part division included a wide range of specific values: from purely hedonistic and vital, through instrumental and utilitarian, to cultural and even spiritual ones.

Conclusion: The use of allotment gardens has numerous benefits for the respondents. Among the benefits mentioned by the respondents are relaxation, the possibility of cultivating vegetables and fruits and health preservation. Using allotment gardens is also the most common way of spending free time by the respondents, which shows how important allotment gardens are in their daily lives.

KEY WORD: Allotment Gardens, Midlife, Axiological Perspective

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I. INTRODUCTION

The term ‘axiology’ appeared at the turn of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and relatively quickly became one of the fundamental branches of philosophy. Axiology deals with the study of values, and the issues raised in this regard belong to the philosophy of man, as well as the theory of cognition and metaphysics. Before the term ‘axiology’ became popular, the term ‘good’, indicating a value, was used in this type of consideration¹. The very term ‘value’ (Latin: *valor*) comes from the verb ‘to be valuable’ (*valere*). This term is also used in the non-axiological sense, e.g. in economics and mathematics². However, due to the nature of the study, the anthropological aspect has been chosen from among the available aspects of this analysis, not the ontological or epistemological aspects.

What is a value according to today’s axiology? A value is everything we appreciate, seek, love and consider to be significant. It can also be said that a value refers to a feature or thing that is so important that we take it into account when making decisions. The first, most general typology of values emerge from this definition of values, namely: subjective values, where the decision-making criterion is a personal position, and objective values, where the criterion of choice is an independent instance (e.g. the requirements of reason, human nature, God, another authority)³. The main issues addressed by axiology are as follows: what are the essence of values (what are the natures of values); what are the types of values; how do values exist (ontological issues); how can we know values (epistemological issues); how can we talk about values; which position (place) do values occupy in human life and culture (anthropological issues).

The subject of values can be approached from different perspectives. One of them, taken up by the authors, is the relation of values to human activity – in this case, the activity is the use of allotment gardens.

In each European country, there are allotment gardens that have their individual characteristics, traditions, aspirations, communities and forms of activity. All share a similar historical background: allotment gardens protected people from material deprivation and supported the family budget. The first allotment gardens began to be created along with the development of industry and cities and the migration of the agricultural population to cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their goal was to produce vegetables and fruits for poor working-class families and provide outdoor recreation after monotonous work in the factory⁴.

Family allotment gardens (*Rodzinne Ogrody Działkowe* – ROD) in Poland are located in large cities relatively close to residential areas. They are, in a sense, the remainder of the socialist era, although the first such gardens – ROD ‘Kąpiele Słoneczne’ in Grudziądz – were created as early as 1897. The most intensive development of allotment gardens in Poland occurred during the economic crisis in the 1980’s because they were an important place for food production. According to the data of the Central Statistical Office (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny* – GUS), a total of 700,000 tonnes of fruits and vegetables, 3,500 tonnes of rabbit and chicken meat and several hundred tonnes of honey have been produced in allotment gardens since 1987 in Poland. From the 1990s, the gardens began to play a more recreational and hobby role⁵. According to statistical data (data of the Polish Association of Allotment Garden Owners – *Polski Związek Działkowców*) in 2017 there were 917,000 allotment gardens in Poland, i.e. almost one million (in a country with 38 million residents). Considering that each of them is used by an average of three to four people, this constitutes 10% of the population directly or indirectly benefiting from garden cultivation. Allotment gardens are primarily cultivated by seniors and this is a favourite hobby of seniors⁶. Cultivating a garden is the most popular physical activity in the leisure time of people over 65 years old in Poland. According to Pol Senior research, 64% of people indicate gardening as the main way of spending free time⁷. Research on motivation indicates that crops are the main reason for and the goal of the work of urban gardeners⁸. However, an in-depth analysis has revealed that crops include values such as healthy food, satisfaction and pride, a sense of agency and the ability to share crops⁹.

Clearly the use of allotment gardens is directly connected with different types of values. Thus, the study conducted from the axiological perspective seems to be one of the most accurate. Although, as mentioned, the analysis does not touch upon profound ontological or epistemological aspects, but focuses on the anthropological dimension, the answers obtained indirectly point to significant meta-meanings, which are also mentioned in this article.

The choice of axiological analysis for the purpose of this study are all the more desirable when considering the pluralism of values in axiology. These are, among others: vital, economic-technical, pleasure, moral, cognitive, aesthetic, moral and religious values. Sometimes a distinction is also made between personal, existential and general cultural values¹⁰.

II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study involved 140 people. The request to complete the questionnaire was given to 175 people but 35 people did not take part in the study, explaining that they did not have time. The study participants were selected using the nonprobability sampling technique. The inclusion criteria were:

- age - over 50 years of age,
- allotment gardens users;
- allotment garden located in Kraków or Katowice or Kielce.

The study consisted of field research and was carried out from July to September 2018. The respondents filled out the paper version of the questionnaire – all of them also gave their written consent to participate in the study. The discipline of the respondents in answering the questions should be emphasised – all collected questionnaires were analysed and the answers were reliable.

The aim of the study was to determine by what values the surveyed users of allotment gardens were guided. The following research questions were formulated:

What values can be attributed to the motives for which the respondents decided to start using allotment gardens? What were the respondents’ motivations for using allotment gardens? What methods of spending free time do the respondents prefer and, of these, how important is the use of allotment gardens?

The research tool was an original questionnaire prepared by the authors of this article, consisting of eight questions and the respondent’s particulars. Five questions were open and they concerned the motivation to use allotment gardens, the benefits of using them and the ways in which the respondents encouraged other people to have allotment gardens. The respondent’s particulars containing basic socio-demographic data were placed at the end of the questionnaire. The analysis of the collected data was of both a quantitative and qualitative nature. In the quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics were used. The aim of this article was not to search for statistical connections, but to try to grasp the essence of the phenomenon of values within the cultivation of allotment gardens. To this end, it was decided to use only descriptive statistics and to supplement the text with elements relevant for qualitative analysis. The authors are aware that the sample is not very numerous - hence the in-depth statistical analysis may not be considered justified. Nevertheless, the presentation of the quantitative data collected was considered to be quite significant and therefore included in this article. In the authors’ opinion, qualitative analysis allows us to reach individual meanings that are contained in the statements of the respondents – for we cannot say anything in a full and exhaustive way, except with the help of numbers referring to the quantitative view of phenomena. Answers to open questions were categorised however, and in the ‘results’ section it was decided to quote some statements in order to better illustrate the perspective of the respondents. The respondents were very eager to participate in the study, widely commenting on the

questionnaire's questions and expressing satisfaction with the possibility of sharing their thoughts on the use of allotment gardens. People above 71 years of age were particularly eager to do so.

The studied group consisted of 52.86% women and 47.14% men. Most of the respondents were people in relationships – 77.14%. The most represented age group was composed of people aged 50-59, constituting 50.72% of the respondents. The largest number of respondents (31.86%) have used allotment gardens for 6 to 15 years. Most of the respondents (56.43%) lived in cities with 100,000 to 500,000 residents. Table 1 shows detailed socio-demographic data.

Table no 1 Socio-demographic data of respondents

Category	N (140)	%
Sex		
Female	74	52.86
Male	66	47.14
Marital status		
Married	108	77.14
Widow/widower	12	8.57
Divorcee	6	4.29
Single person	14	10
Age (in years)		
50–59	71	50.72
60–69	51	36.43
>70	18	12.85
Period of use of an allotment garden (in years)		
<5	21	15
6–15	53	37.86
16–25	39	27.86
> 26	27	19.28
Place of residence		
village	7	5
a city of up to 20,000 residents	6	4.29
20,000–100,000 residents	3	2.14
100,000–500,000 residents	79	56.43
>500,000 residents	45	32.14

III. RESULTS

The questionnaire began with an open question of what prompted the respondents to start using allotment gardens. Answers were grouped into several categories and then ranked based on the frequency of their occurrence. 'Contact with nature' was in first place among the categories (38.57%). The respondents indicated that they started using the garden because it was a refuge from the noise of the city for them and it satisfied the need to have a 'piece of land' and 'gives the opportunity to rest in the bosom of nature'. Other answers were as follows: 'I love nature', 'I need a green place', 'I feel love for nature' and 'I want to spend time in the air and listen to birds singing', 'I want to calm down in the bosom of nature, it makes it easier to travel inside myself' and 'when I work with plants, I unload stress'. A category called 'free time management' was in second place (24.30%). Respondents filling in the questionnaires emphasised that 'retirement is a time that needs to be managed', 'I want to develop my hobby, which is growing a garden', 'I want to sensibly spend the time left after returning from work' and 'I have too much free time – I have to do something with it'. The category 'a place for family and friends' was in the third place (17.14%). The respondents said: 'I bought the allotment garden to have somewhere to meet my relatives' and 'meetings in the allotment garden are an opportunity to keep in touch with others'. This category also includes answers referring to the purchase of a garden at the request of a spouse, children or grandchildren. The category 'own vegetables and fruits' was in fourth place in terms of the frequency of responses (12.14%). The respondents emphasised that they wanted to 'experience the taste of fresh fruits, without fertilisers', 'eat healthily and ecologically thanks to crops harvested from the allotment garden'. Respondents also replied that they wanted to improve their finances by cultivating vegetables and fruits for their own needs and thus reduce the need to buy them. The category 'inheritance of the allotment garden' was in fifth place (5.71%). The respondents indicated that they had inherited their garden from

their parents. 'Investment' was the last category with the lowest number of responses (2.14%). This category included statements stressing the willingness to invest collected financial resources.

In the next question, the respondents determined how often they spent time in the allotment garden per month (during the season, i.e. from March to October). Most respondents replied: 'very often' (42.86%) and 'somewhat often' (42.14%). Moreover, 10% of respondents indicated 'neither often nor rarely'. Those who spent time in the allotment garden 'somewhat rarely' amounted to 4.29% of respondents, and 'very rarely' to 0.71%.

In the next question the respondents determined what benefits they derived from using allotment gardens. The responses were categorised and then ranked based on the frequency of responses. 'Relaxation' was the most often indicated benefit (38.57%). Sample responses of the respondents included in this category were as follows: 'I relax in the allotment garden after work', 'the allotment garden is an escape from the hustle and bustle of the city to a place where there is peace and tranquillity', 'I escape there from the big city to calm down' and 'contact with nature allows me to break away from everyday problems'. Subsequently, it was important for the respondents to 'grow their own vegetables and fruits' (27.14%), which was included in the same category. The respondents indicated that by cultivating their own vegetables and fruits, they saved money, ate ecologically and healthily, prepared preserves for their own use and shared them with their family and friends. The third category was 'health preservation', constituting 11.43% of responses. Examples of respondents' answers included in this category are as follows: 'I can do physical exercises in the allotment garden', 'I'm more physically active' and 'my mental well-being improves thanks to working with plants'. Three categories: 'time spent with family', 'aesthetic experience' and 'contact with nature' were in fourth place (7.14%). Interesting answers related to aesthetic experiences. It is worth quoting some of them. The respondents claimed: 'I can admire flowers', 'I enjoy watching plants' and 'I listen to the beautiful singing of birds and enjoy the beauty of plants'. Regarding the time spent with family, some respondents indicated that they felt joy thanks to time spent with their family. One of the individuals jokingly remarked that 'thanks to the garden, I do not quarrel with my husband'. Only 1.44% of respondents said that using allotment gardens did not bring them any benefits.

The respondents were asked to assess the use of allotment gardens on the five-point Likert scale. Each of the sentences began with the sequence 'Using the allotment garden allows me to ...'. The statements that the majority of respondents strongly agreed with were: 'relax', 'be in contact with nature' and 'develop the garden according to my own design and creativity'. Table 2 contains detailed results.

Table no 2 Assessment of respondents compliance with claims regarding the use of allotment gardens

		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Contact with nature (plants, animals)	N	115	22	1	2	0
	%	82.15	15.71	0.71	1.43	0
Meaningful spending of time	N	98	34	7	1	0
	%	70	24.29	5	0.71	0
Health preservation	N	85	37	16	2	0
	%	60.71	26.43	11.43	1.43	0
Having a place where I can invite my friends and family	N	90	33	9	7	1
	%	64.29	23.57	6.43	5	0.71
Self-sufficiency connected with the cultivation of vegetables and fruits so that I rarely need to buy them	N	27	24	19	34	36
	%	19.29	17.14	13.57	24.29	25.71

Keeping social contacts	N	60	51	22	7	0
	%	42.86	36.43	15.71	5	0
A sense of control over life	N	32	46	49	11	2
	%	22.85	32.86	35	7.86	1.43
Communing with beauty	N	97	38	4	1	0
	%	69.29	27.14	2.86	0.71	0
Garden development according to my own design and creativity	N	102	31	5	2	0
	%	72.86	22.14	3.57	1.43	0
Relaxation	N	123	13	3	1	0
	%	87.86	9.29	21.14	0.71	0
A refuge from everyday problems	N	110	20	5	4	1
	%	78.57	14.29	3.57	2.86	0.71

Then, among the statements presented in Table 2, respondents indicated the ones that were most important to them. 'Relaxation' was most often indicated, followed by 'contact with nature'. 'Meaningful spending of time' and 'having a place where I can invite my family and friends' obtained the same number of responses. People who claimed that the use of an allotment garden allowed them to relax argued that thanks to the garden they cut themselves off from everyday problems and 'can purge the mind'. The garden offers a 'break from reality and stressful work' for them. The owners of allotment gardens who pointed to 'contact with nature' claimed that thanks to this, they regained vitality, energy and got rid of fatigue. 'Meaningful spending of time' was combined with self-development and performing physical activity in the open air. The statement 'the allotment garden is a place where I can invite my family and friends' was indicated as the most important by people who also claimed that 'during meetings in the garden I forget about the speed of life' and 'thanks to the garden relations with my relatives have improved significantly'. They also emphasised that time with friends and family was devoted to conversation and barbecuing.

The respondents were also asked to reflect on the changes that had taken place in the function of allotment gardens over the past few years. Most respondents (36.43%) claimed that they did not notice any significant changes. Moreover, 27.14% emphasised that, in their opinion, the function of allotment gardens had evolved from typically functional to recreational. What is more, 11.44% of respondents noticed technical progress regarding allotment gardens, such as increased access to media and modern devices, improving work in the garden and being part of the gardens' equipment. There were 10.71% who indicated that a generational change was taking place, i.e. the gardens were used by increasingly younger people. As one of the respondents noted, 'allotment gardens were once associated with seniors. Times have changed. Now they are used by younger and younger ones. Another generation has come.' Table 3 contains detailed data on the changes in the functioning of allotment gardens as observed by the respondents.

Table no 3 Changes in the functioning of allotment gardens in the opinions of respondents

Name of the observed change	N (140)	%
Not observed	51	36.43
Generational change; gardens are used by younger and younger people	15	10.71
Change in the function of the garden from functional to recreational	38	27.14
Increased number of unkempt gardens	5	3.57
Increased anonymity of garden users	6	4.28
Appearance of new varieties of plants and vegetables	9	6.43

Technical progress (increased access to the media, modern devices improving work in allotment gardens)	16	11.44
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In the next step, the respondents determined how they preferred to spend their free time. Their answers were ranked based on the frequency of responses of individual claims. The use of the allotment garden was in first place among ways of spending free time, followed by: meetings with friends, performing physical activity, spending time with family and reading. In the category ‘other’, the respondents indicated that they spent time in front of a computer, riding a motorcycle or doing handicrafts. Detailed answers are presented in Table 4.

Table no 4 Ways of spending free time preferred by respondents (N=140)

Name of the factor	Rank	Number of indications
Use of the allotment garden	1	57
Meetings with friends	2	29
Performing physical activity (bike, exercise, walking etc.)	3	22
Spending time with family	4	13
Reading	5	10
Other	6	9

In the last part of the questionnaire, the respondents defined how they would encourage others to use allotment gardens. The answers obtained were very diverse. It is worth quoting at least some of them. For example: ‘the allotment garden is the best way to de-stress’, ‘contact with nature always has a positive effect on the well-being of a person’, ‘the best leisure option’, ‘silence, peace, a bit of freedom’, ‘the allotment garden is in the genes’, ‘do not sit in the block, go to the allotment garden’, ‘a simple and inexpensive way to spend time with your family and friends – what is lacking in the modern world’, ‘the love for soil cultivation comes with age’, ‘a garden is a refuge for everyone and is beneficial to the entire society’, ‘this is the last oasis of greenery in a big city’, ‘growing vegetables and watching their growth is a real pleasure. Admiring blooming flowers in various months is invaluable’. A few respondents would encourage potential gardeners by inviting them to try the crops from their own gardens – primarily vegetables and fruits, as well as home-made wine.

IV. DISCUSSION

In the introduction, axiological pluralism is mentioned and some types of values are listed. The analysis of the respondents' opinions from the axiological perspective requires, however, a reference to more detailed typologies.

The subject of values important for allotment gardens users was discussed in numerous scientific articles. However, it is worth noting that in most studies value analysis as such is not necessarily the main goal. Nevertheless, in virtually every study values appear as the background to the analysis performed. Actually, it can be said that an analysis of the use of allotment gardens and their importance for users is not possible without the value component. For instance, Borčić, Cvitanović and Lukić¹¹ state: *community gardens are (...) multilayered sites which reflect, replicate and contest dominant social values and norms*. The same authors¹¹ also note that: *Studies conducted in former socialist countries often give us insight into the historical perspective of the development, and the attitudes and dominant social values assigned to urban agriculture, e.g. in Poland*⁵. The literature presents allotment and community gardens as heterotopias, or places marked by their difference from the dominant environment¹². Perhaps one of the reasons for this difference is the concentration of the possibilities of realizing very different values in a small area. For example Spilková and Vágner¹³ list among the benefits of allotment gardening enumerate: *getting out in the fresh air and physical exercise, therapeutic value of gardening, opportunities for ecological engagement, wellbeing of the elderly, growing organic food, knowing the origins of what one eats, ecological processes of food production and saving on food expenditure*.

Freeman, Dickinson, Porter, van Heezik¹⁴, while analysing studies undertaken by Kiesling and Mannig¹⁵, distinguish five main groups of values related to gardens, but also to allotment gardens: (1) *escapism, the garden as an antidote to more stressful parts of life*; (2) *ownership and identity, attachment to and creating place through gardening*; (3) *connectedness to nature, primarily relationships with fauna and flora*; (4) *social relationships, where gardens reflect memories but are also places for relaxing with family, friends and creating neighbourhood connections*; (5) *a duty of caring, where gardens represents ways of showing affinity with and caring for the environment*; and (6) *health, both physical and mental, this accords also with the escapism theme*. The research presented in this article contains all of the groups of values listed above.

Values appear for the first time in the concept of Plato who distinguished the triad: Truth, Beauty and Good. However, it should be remembered that in Platonic idealism these concepts signify real, indestructible and perfect beings, or ideas. Ideas exist realistically, but only in the intelligible world, i.e. available only to the

mind, not to the senses, and serve as a model. According to Plato's concept, in the world available to our senses, all things surrounding us are imperfect reflections of ideas. Therefore, all that is beautiful is a flawed imitation of perfect Beauty and all that is good imitates Good, etc. Platonic idealism is really difficult to define as axiology as it is, above all, an original ontological concept. True typologies of values appeared at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the emergence of modern axiology.

One of the most important typologies is Max Scheler's hierarchy of values. According to this typology, values are ranked as follows:

1. hedonic/pleasure values (e.g. pleasure, distress, pain) – this is the lowest level;
2. utilitarian/utility values (e.g. functionality, efficiency, dexterity);
3. vital/biological values (e.g. health, vigour, vitality);
4. spiritual values including aesthetic values (beauty, ugliness), legal values (fairness, wrongness) and cognitive values (truthfulness, objectivity);
4. absolute values, Sacrum – this is the highest level¹⁸.

It is worth noting that in the above division, just like in the entire axiology, values occur in positive and negative versions (the so-called anti-values) – e.g. in opposition: beauty and ugliness.

Another typology of values was proposed by Roman Ingarden, an associate of Edmund Husserl, who was, like Max Scheler, a representative of phenomenology and one of the main authors of axiology. Ingarden's classification of values are as follows:

1. vital values (utility and pleasure)
2. cultural values (aesthetic, cognitive and social values)
3. moral values in the strictest sense¹⁶.

Currently, other value divisions can be found. For example:

1. instrumental values (menial values) – they are an intermediate stage in acquiring other values
2. ultimate values (absolute values)¹⁷.

Values can also be ordered by answering the question: A value – for whom? (the speaking subject?; other subjects?; society?; humankind?)¹⁷.

The respondents' responses are a clear example of axiological pluralism. Their answers indicated values from both the lower and upper levels of the axiological hierarchy. In some cases, instrumental/menial values (e.g. the allotment garden as a place where family and friends can be invited) were associated with ultimate values (improvement of family relations thanks to the garden). Hedonistic and utilitarian values were strongly emphasised, but cultural, spiritual and even sacral values were also mentioned. It is worth noting that the respondents' statements often contained synergies of various types of values. For example, the following values which were mentioned as benefits: 'listening to birds singing', 'admiring flowers', 'enjoying the sight of plants' can be classified as hedonistic values (feeling pleasure), which are considered by Scheler and Ingarden as lower level values, and as aesthetic values, which again occupy a higher level in both typologies (spiritual in Scheler's and cultural in Ingarden's).

It should be emphasised that the replies obtained confirm the thesis of contemporary axiology that man is a being who lives in the space of values¹⁸. Respondents' statements reveal a coherent axiosphere, which is filled with positive values and is an escape from negative values (anti-values). At the level of meta-axiological analysis, this regularity can be interpreted in terms of an agonistic relation between values (Greek: *agon* – struggle), but here the authors only mention this observation because more detailed considerations would already enter the ontological level, which is not the purpose of this article. Moreover, the axiological analysis of the answers obtained makes it possible to conclude that they contain the most important concepts of philosophical anthropology (this is discussed further in the article).

Considering the answers obtained in more detail, it should be stated that they fit all the aforementioned contemporary axiological typologies. Further in the article the results obtained are assigned, together with examples of the respondents' statements, to individual types of values indicating the relevant classification (Scheler, Ingarden, and Puzynina). The results are grouped based on the reference criterion because the statements refer to: nature, other people and oneself (the speaking subject).

1. Values regarding contact with nature – hedonistic, utilitarian, vital, instrumental, spiritual and cultural. Sample statements and their axiological references:

A refuge from the noise of the city: utilitarian (Scheler), vital (Ingarden) and instrumental (Puzynina) values. It is worth noting that this statement is an example of the aforementioned agonistic relationship between values, namely the positive value competes with the negative value (anti-value);

the need to have a piece of land: utilitarian (Scheler), vital (Ingarden) and instrumental (Puzynina) values;

growing vegetables and observing their growth is a real pleasure: hedonistic, spiritual (Scheler), vital, cultural (Ingarden) and instrumental (Puzynina) values;

I love nature; I feel love for nature; I want to calm down in the bosom of nature; it makes it easier to travel inside myself: spiritual (Scheler) and cultural (Ingarden) values. It is worth paying attention to the interesting

variation of cognitive value, namely introspection (Socrates claimed that the most important thing is to get to know oneself). In the study, respondents were not asked what nature was for them. Many people consider the world of nature as something 'humanly' sacred¹⁸. In further research, it would be interesting to determine whether at least some allotment gardens users belong to this group of people. If they do then the Sacrum (absolute) values would join the spiritual and cultural values.

2. Values regarding contact with others – utilitarian, vital, instrumental and cultural. Sample statements and their axiological references:

I bought an allotment garden to have somewhere to meet my relatives– instrumental (Puzynina), utilitarian (Scheler), vital and cultural (Ingarden) values;

meetings in the allotment garden are an opportunity to maintain contacts with others– instrumental (Puzynina), utilitarian (Scheler) and vital and cultural (Ingarden) values;

the purchase of a garden at the request of a spouse, children, grandchildren– utilitarian (Scheler) and cultural (Ingarden) values. However, it is possible to assign ethical significance to the statements from this group (acting for the benefit of others) and thus classify them to the category of higher values (e.g. Ingarden's moral values);

thanks to the garden I do not quarrel with my husband, thanks to the garden my relations with relatives have improved significantly– instrumental (Puzynina), utilitarian (Scheler), and cultural and moral (Ingarden) values;

sharing preserves with family and friends – instrumental (Puzynina), utilitarian (Scheler), and cultural and moral (Ingarden) values.

3. Values related to oneself– hedonistic, vital, utilitarian, instrumental, cultural and spiritual. Sample statements and their axiological references:

I rest in the allotment garden after work: hedonistic, utilitarian, vital (Scheler) and vital (Ingarden) values;

I regain vitality, energy and get rid of fatigue: hedonistic, utilitarian, vital (Scheler), and vital (Ingarden) values;

I can do physical exercises in the garden: hedonistic, utilitarian, vital (Scheler), and vital (Ingarden) values;

my mental well-being improves thanks to working with plants: hedonistic, utilitarian, vital (Scheler), and vital (Ingarden) values;

I have too much free time and I have to do something with it: utilitarian (Scheler), and cultural (Ingarden) values. Statements about (sensible) spending (excessive) free time once again outline an agonistic relationship between what is a value for a given person (being active) and what is an anti-value (inactivity, boredom, emptiness);

I want to feel the taste of fresh fruits without fertilisers: hedonistic (Scheler) and vital (Ingarden) values.

At this point, it is worth emphasising the emergence of a new function of the allotment garden, i.e. the health function. It manifests itself in the organic production of fruits and vegetables without pesticides, as well as outdoor activities and interesting hobbies that have a positive impact on the body and mind^{20,21}. From the perspective of social health, allotment gardens stand for the construction of healthy communities and closer family and social ties, as well as the balanced upbringing of generations. Allotment gardens build strong communities and friendships because the neighbourhood is based on common goals, similar problems, mutual help and shared interests^{22,23}.

The cultivation of allotment gardens is ultimately a centuries-old culture associated with the skills of cultivating land in a given community on a regional or national scale. Culture as such is also, or primarily, created by cultivating soil; thus shaping an individual, a community and landscape. In this approach, the cultivation of allotment gardens goes beyond the mere efficiency of food production, and becomes the expression of the disappearing culture of land cultivation, transfer of ecological knowledge and self-sufficiency of man, satisfying their utilitarian and aesthetic needs. In the face of ever-progressing global urbanisation, allotment gardens are an important part of culture^{14,24}.

Man is always for or against some values. These choices assign the subject to various models created within the framework of philosophical anthropology. These usually show the nature and condition of man in the surrounding world of nature and civilisation, although they may also contain references to the transcendent sphere. The axiological analysis of the statements obtained in this study clearly refer to several important concepts of philosophical anthropology.

As an example, one can highlight the proposal of Max Scheler defining man as *homo faber*, i.e. creatures that produce things with their own hands. According to Scheler, man is biologically infirm and therefore unable to adapt to nature, unlike the other animals, and so man began to adapt nature to themselves, which was possible due to their practical (technical) intelligence and the associated extreme manual dexterity¹⁸. Of course, the aforementioned term *homo faber*, is only a part of Max Scheler's phenomenological anthropology programme (which ultimately depicts man as an embodied and revitalised spirit). It seems, however, to reflect some of the respondents' statements (garden development according to their own design and creativity). Johan Huizinga's concept of *homo ludens* may be another reference in the field of philosophical anthropology that fits this study. *Homo ludens* is a vision of man as a being whose basic activity is play. It releases human creativity and energy and, through the release of these forces, man can better master the world and give it meaning.

According to Huizinga, it was possible to initiate and shape civilisation and culture²⁵ thanks to the spirit of the play elements that are characteristic for human beings. The respondents statements contain traces that lead directly and indirectly to the concept of *homo ludens* (allotment gardens give the opportunity to pursue a hobby, relax, do physical exercise and socialise).

However, according to the authors, it is particularly interesting to look at the results obtained from the perspective of Henry David Thoreau's experiment described in his book *Walden, or Life in the Woods*. Thoreau was an outstanding representative of New England transcendentalism, belonging to a group of intellectuals gathered around R.W. Emerson. The author of the famous essay *Civil Disobedience*, a supporter of abolition, an ascetic and moralist, Thoreau was also referred to as 'Rousseau's student'²⁶. The author of *Walden* was fascinated by Rousseau's longing for the unattainable state of nature, in which 'man was fully happy, because he was not touched by the negative influence of progress and civilisation'. Rousseau's vision of civilian progress leading to the moral degeneration of man became the beginning of so-called escapism – a movement postulating the possibility of escaping from civilisation into the world of nature²⁷. Thoreau, who 'walked on Broadway, longing for the loneliness and silence of the Concord fields', wrote in his letter: 'the better I get to know the city, the less I like it'²⁶. He finally decided to carry out an experiment and spent two years in close contact with nature. In 1845, he started to live alone in a hut at Lake Walden, where he observed nature and satisfied his needs by the work of his own hands, including gardening. It was a kind of a manifesto by which Thoreau wanted to prove that 'work providing livelihood on our land is not a chore, but a pastime'²⁶. He praised a modest and also a conscious life which was, above all, associated with nature ('I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately... I did not wish to live what was not life'²⁸). It is not surprising that the Green Movement and the critics of consumerism continue to refer to Thoreau²⁷. Thoreau's escapism can also be read as an attitude shared by ecophilosophers, such as Henryk Skolimowski, who presents ecophilosophy as a form of escape from the soulless, axiologically empty civilisation dominated by the philosophy of pragmatism.

Walden is undoubtedly one of the most important works of American and world literature. It is an erudite, multithreaded, deep work that aroused the admiration of Marcel Proust, among others. Of course, in *Walden*, Thoreau does not only write about nature, plants and gardening, but there is no doubt that these threads are among the most interesting and important ones. For example, as John Evelyn states, Thoreau emphasises a certain 'magnetism' of the cultivated fresh soil and the joy that this effort gives²⁸. According to Thoreau, man, 'like Antaeus', takes strength from contact with cultivated land^{(1),28}. The author of *Walden* presents a specific understanding of the relationship between man and nature in the following words:

I came to love my rows, my beans ... What shall I learn of beans or beans of me? I cherish them, I ho them, early and late I have an eye to them; and this is my day's work. ... It was a singular experience that long acquaintance which I cultivated with beans, what with planting, and hoeing, and harvesting, and threshing, and picking over and selling them... I might add eating... Consider the intimate and curious acquaintance one makes with various kinds of weeds... Daily the beans saw me come to their rescue armed with a hoe, and thin the ranks of their enemies, filling up the trenches with weedy dead²⁸

The symbolism and personification of nature contained in the above quotations can also be found in other fragments of *Walden*. For example, Thoreau states: 'The indescribable innocence and beneficence of Nature?... Shall I not have intelligence with the earth'²⁸. Elsewhere, he postulates: 'Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature...'²⁸

According to the authors the correspondence between Thoreau's attitude and practical experience to the respondents answers obtained in the study is striking. For example: 'the love for soil cultivation comes with age'; 'the garden is a refuge for everyone and it brings benefits to the entire society'; 'growing vegetables and watching their growth is a real pleasure'; 'admiring blossoming flowers in various months is invaluable'; 'I love nature'; 'I feel love for nature'; 'I want to calm down in the bosom of nature, it makes it easier to travel inside myself'; 'my mental well-being improves thanks to working with plants'; 'I enjoy watching plants'; and 'I listen to the beautiful singing of birds and enjoy the beauty of plants'. Based on some statements, it can also be concluded that the respondents treat the use of their allotment gardens as a form of escapism from the burden of civilisation. Of course, their escapism is not as radical as that of Thoreau – cultivating an allotment garden is not the same as living in a lonely hut by a forest lake. Nevertheless, the respondents statements are clearly similar to Thoreau's message contained in *Walden*. These repetitive words are particularly significant: 'separation', 'cutting off', 'a refuge' or even 'an escape'. For example: 'the allotment garden is an escape from the hustle and bustle of the city to a place where there is peace and tranquillity'; 'escape from the big city to calm down'; 'a refuge from the noise of the city'; 'a refuge from reality and stressful work'; and 'contact with nature allows me to break away from everyday problems'. While some of the statements are rather pessimistic or nostalgic (e.g. 'This is the last oasis of greenery in the big city'), others are more optimistic and energetic (e.g. 'do not sit in the

(1) Antaeus – a figure in Greek mythology, the son of Poseidon (god of the seas and oceans) and Gaia (the primal Mother Earth goddess). Antaeus was one of the giants, invincible in wrestling, because every touch of his mother Gaia restored his strength. He was only defeated by Heracles, who killed him while holding him in the air.

block, go to the allotment garden'). However, regardless of the emotional tone of the statements, the respondents always depict their allotment gardens and contact with nature as a relief and rest as opposed to urbanised reality, from which they want to get out of even if just for a moment.

The reasons for cultivating gardens change along with the character of allotment gardens, which are nowadays perceived as an important culture-forming element. They create a significant value in the tissue of urban biodiversity. Their value grows well beyond the economic value of the land on which they exist due to their extensive social and ecological significance. Allotment gardens have the potential to host greater land diversity than public parks and the countryside, especially in areas dominated by agricultural monoculture^{29, 24,}

³⁰

Allotment gardens form a city landscape and are an extremely important element in the protection of the urban ecosystem and biodiversity, which is why they should be appreciated and taken into account in urban planning and the development of future cities^{31, 32}. However, the pressure of urbanisation minimises the area devoted to such gardens and reduces existing ones¹³. The rich flora, attractive fauna and the diversity of use develop the ecological awareness of urban residents. The simplest, most basic contact with nature, even in the urban context, can have a significant impact on the pro-ecological attitude of individuals and affects their understanding of the importance of environmental protection. This phenomenon, known as 'the pigeon paradox', shows that individuals become more sensitive to global environmental problems after direct contact with common vegetation or synanthropic animals, such as pigeons³³. Land cultivation in allotment gardens can counteract the contemporary process of alienation between man and nature observed by scientists and called 'ecological illiteracy' or 'extinction-of-experience'^{34,35,36}.

The study of values with which garden allotment users identify themselves seems to be quite a complicated task due to the variety of these values. Therefore it is not easy to construct a precise tool for a detailed axiological analysis of the values emerging from the respondents' statements. The authors realise that their study has its limitations. One of them is that the research tool does not include a greater number of questions, which would allow for a wider inference. For example, it does not include the question of what nature means to respondents, which could be interesting for the analysis of the values expressed by them. A relatively small sample can also be regarded as a weak point of the study. On the other hand, the fact that it was conducted using field research in three different cities may be a certain justification. The authors are of the opinion that the study should be continued and the results obtained should also be analysed in a quantitative way.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of the study results the research questions posed can be answered.

Axiological pluralism manifests itself in the examined motifs for the use of allotment gardens. Based on the reference points in the respondents' statements, we have identified values related to: 1. contact with nature, 2. contact with others, and 3. oneself.

The use of allotment gardens brings numerous benefits to the respondents. Among the most frequently mentioned are: relaxation, the possibility of cultivating vegetables and fruits, and health preservation. These values can be described as vital, hedonistic and instrumental. The use of allotment gardens is the most common way of spending free time by the respondents, which shows how important a place it occupies in their daily functioning.

Summing up the content presented in this article, it can be stated that man's longing for contact with nature is most directly and effectively satisfied by cultivating land and growing plants. This applies to people living in the twenty-first century, as well as Thoreau's and Rousseau's contemporaries. It seems, therefore, that these are fundamental truths in both the anthropological and axiological dimensions because, as has already been mentioned, man living in the world always lives in the world of multiple values at the same time.

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