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# Husbandry, alchemy, and technologies of ameliorating nature in the works of Gabriel Plattes

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## Abstract

Dealing with the concept of growth both in a chemical and moral way, husbandry was considered in the mid seventeenth century England, the key to salvation, providing solutions for ameliorating as well the economic estate of the nation and the fallen estate of human being. The application of chemistry to practical problems (such as agricultural, medical, educational) has origins traced to Paracelsus and alchemical tradition. But the moral dimension entailed in this process of growth, aiming to ameliorate the fallen condition and to restore the qualities lost in the Fall, is inherited from Bacon. Also, the translation from one domain (such as the vegetal domain easy to explore) to another one (such as the human soul, difficult to explore) points to the Baconian methodological extensions allowed by *experientia literata*. In this paper I will investigate Gabriel Plattes' view on husbandry. Inspired by the Baconian tradition of experimentation, sharing the same unified vision upon the universe and using the same methodological analogies, Plattes reformulates the view on husbandry, promoting a new type of 'integrated science' able to cultivate the land and the human soul as well. Apart from other tracts on husbandry published before, Plattes used the alchemical tradition but, as Bacon, committed the application of chemistry to a moral end. He developed his own experimental view on husbandry, placing at the very core of amelioration the idea of technological advancement (a project based on transmutation experiments and cyclical chemical change). Plattes' contribution rests in providing a number of 'technologies of amelioration' for the material of Creation (soil, plants, human beings), technologies of salvation compatible with both economic advancement and religious salvation.

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