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### 3 *Condiscipuli Sumus*

#### The Roots of Horizontal Learning in Monastic Culture

*Micol Long*

##### Abstract

This chapter addresses the place of horizontal learning in monastic culture. Firstly, it focuses on the relation between theoretical instances of horizontal learning and the evidence for horizontal learning practices in monastic everyday life. On the basis of this, it proposes a reflection on the extent to which horizontal learning can be associated with the monastic world in comparison to other contexts, first and foremost the world of secular clerics and canon regulars. While there can be no doubt that horizontal learning is not unique to the monastic world, an evaluation of the complex balance between horizontal learning and vertical learning must always consider that much depends on the individual author, his or her social and religious status, the kind of community, and the specific contents and contexts of learning.

**Keywords:** Medieval/Middle Ages, monasticism, friendship, orality, teaching, learning

While the previous chapter focused on the dimension of the community and its importance for the development of a theory of horizontal learning, this chapter addresses horizontal learning under a different but complementary angle: as an exchange of knowledge that took place between peers, where the two key aspects are the equality of the parties involved and the reciprocity of the exchange.

Looking for attestations of such exchanges in medieval monastic culture is by no means an easy task. Texts that explicitly focus on monastic

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formation almost invariably highlight the role of a master and stress the need for obedience, suggesting a vertical and one-way transmission of knowledge. Christina Lutter observed that, in such sources, the focus on unity as a primary issue leads to a lack of attention to interpersonal relations – and, one might add, to the variety of possible learning agents and the reciprocal nature of learning exchanges.<sup>1</sup> In general, the aim with which the sources were produced inevitably influences the way in which they represent learning; for example, chronicles and saints' lives often privilege the relationship between one master and one pupil (often destined to take his master's place) in order to represent a simplified and uninterrupted chain of transmission of knowledge and authority. The essays collected in this volume offer examples of how information about horizontal learning can be identified in, or inferred from, different kinds of medieval sources, ranging from chronicles, statutes, saint lives, collections of miracle stories, and spiritual treatises to compilations, letters, and liturgical works. In the present essay I simply put forth a few observations concerning the theoretical foundations of horizontal learning in monastic culture, and its relationship with the evidence for the practice of horizontal learning in everyday monastic life, with particular attention to eleventh- and twelfth-century sources. On the basis of this, I conclude with a reflection on the extent to which horizontal learning can be associated with the monastic world compared to other medieval religious communities.

A possible starting point to track the existence of horizontal learning in monastic culture is offered by the notion of co-discipleship, which is attested in the work of several high medieval monastic authors, often in connection with the notion of learning, as we will see. The word *condiscipulus* appears in the Gospel of John, but just in passing and without the theological implications that we find in some high medieval authors.<sup>2</sup> The famous Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux wrote around 1130 to the regular canon Thomas, provost of Beverley, telling him to accept him as a fellow-disciple (*condiscipulus*) rather than as teacher (*magister*):<sup>3</sup> they should share a *magister* in Christ ('*unus sit ambobus magister Christus*'). In this respect Bernard probably influenced his secretary Nicholas, in whose letters we find

1 Lutter, 'Social Groups, Personal Relations', 52.

2 Iohannes 11:16: 'Then Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples' ('*dixit ergo Thomas, qui dicitur Didymus, ad condiscipulos*'). For this and all other reference to the *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, I use *The Vulgate Bible* edited by Angela M. Kinney.

3 'Accipe condiscipulum, quem magistrum eligis', Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola 107*, ed. Gastaldelli, 524.

the same idea of co-discipleship,<sup>4</sup> and may have influenced the Cistercian abbot Aelred of Rievaulx as well. In his *De spiritali amicitia*, Aelred portrayed a dialogue with a pupil of his, during which he declared that he could not teach the young man, only converse with him ('non quidem te doceam sed tecum potius conferam').<sup>5</sup> This offers another example of an abbot who claimed to refuse the role of teacher and instead put himself on an equal level with one of his monks for the purpose of an intellectual exchange.

Statements of this kind are not unique to Cistercian authors, since we can find similar ones in the work of representatives of other religious orders: the Carthusian Stephen of Chalmet wrote to the novices of the priory of Saint Sulpice that he counselled them not as a veteran would counsel young recruits but, rather, as a soldier who still struggled in war and merely wanted to offer some words of exhortation and encouragement.<sup>6</sup> The monastic reformer Peter Damian told a hermit (who had asked him for a rule for hermitic life) that, since he was not superior to others in conduct and he still had much to learn, it would be wrong for him to presume to teach others. He therefore complied with the request only out of fraternal or brotherly love ('a fraterna caritate').<sup>7</sup> Karl Kinsella, in his contribution to this volume, offers yet another example of this tendency: Honorius Augustodunensis introduced one of his works by saying that he had been asked by his *condiscipuli* to explain some little question<sup>8</sup>. While presenting one's work as the product of someone else's request is a widespread topos, the use of the term *condiscipuli* in this context may indeed suggest, as Karl Kinsella argues, that with respect to that kind of learning Honorius saw 'the relationship between him and his peers along horizontal lines'. More in general, it should be considered that the notion of co-discipleship can be traced back to Augustine of Hippo,

4 Nicholas of Clairvaux, *Epistola* 38, 152: 'Herebas lateri meo, placebas cordi meo, meus et frater et filius et, si dignum ducis recordari, discipulus, potius autem condiscipulus, sub illo Magistro cuius schola in terris est et cathedra in celis'.

5 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spiritali amicitia*, book 1, chap. 9, 291.

6 Stephen of Chalmet, *Epistola ad novicios Sancti Sulpicii*, 212: 'Non ego tanquam emeritae militiae veteranus, tyrones instruo, sed quasi milites adhuc ad nova bella rudis, quae ad meam aequae sicut ad vestram vel confirmationem vel exhortationem valeant, profero'. See Allen Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 119, for an English translation and analysis.

7 Peter Damian, *Epistola* 50, 144: 'Nos autem, qui in huius professionis via neminem vivendo praecedimus, caeteros loquendo praeire velut indices sive duces itineris temerarium iudicamus. Praeposterum quippe est, si lingua tamquam magisterii super alios arripiat ferulam, cuius adhuc vita flagellis obnoxiam exhibet clientelam. Sed qui calcato propriae voluntatis arbitrio oboedire Deo per omnia decrevistis, dignum profecto est, tuis quoque petitionibus a fraterna caritate non segniter oboediri'.

8 Kinsella, 'Honorius Augustodunensis', p. 145 (in this volume).

who explicitly linked it to the idea that God is the only true teacher, whose all-encompassing 'school' coincides with life on Earth.<sup>9</sup>

The way in which high medieval authors used the notion of co-discipleship must of course be understood in the context of the wider trend of refusing the honours received and instead claiming for oneself a condition of peer (for example, as brother or co-servant)<sup>10</sup> or even of inferior to the one who had bestowed the praise. The implicit (or, sometimes, explicit) idea behind this was that only God deserved to be honoured,<sup>11</sup> but for the purpose of this essay it is interesting to observe that this rhetoric of humility could affect the way relationships, and therefore the social dynamics of knowledge exchanges, were represented in written sources.

Letters offer a particularly clear example of this, since they often discuss relationships and reflect on how they affected the people involved. For example, some letters written by eleventh- and twelfth-century monastic leaders attest the trend of representing one of their subordinates as their peer, or even their superior, because of his or her merits, playing with the idea of a subversion of the established hierarchy. Anselm of Canterbury referred to a former pupil of his, Maurice, as his master for his merits, his brother in faith, and his son for the solicitude he inspired him;<sup>12</sup> and Hildegard of Bingen called her dearest friend, the nun Richardis, both her mother and her daughter.<sup>13</sup> I believe that these are more than simple rhetorical virtuositities: in both cases, the underlying idea is that an exceptionally good monk or nun offered a valuable contribution to the life of the community and could even be beneficial to the abbot or abbess personally. This is explicitly theorized by Bernard of Clairvaux, who,

9 See for example Augustine of Hippo, *Epistola* 44, 239: 'unum enim magistrum, apud quem condiscipuli sumus, per eius apostolum dociles audire debemus praecipientem' ('for we must, docile, listen to our one master, before whom we are fellow-pupils, when he teaches') and his *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 126, 1859: 'sub illo uno magistro in hac schola vobis cum condiscipuli sumus' ('we are fellow-disciples with you under that one master in this school').

10 For example, Anselm of Canterbury often represented himself as *conservus*, see his *Epistola* 98, ed. Kohlenberger and Rochais, 228, and his *Epistola* 156, ed. Biffi and Marabelli, 124.

11 See Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola* 72, ed. Gastaldelli, 330: 'As, according to the words of our Lord, we are all brothers having one father in heaven, it is not improper for me to turn off from myself with the shield of truth the high names of lord and father with which you think to honor and not burden me, and more appropriately call myself brother and fellow-servant as we share the same Father and the same condition' ('iuxta verbum Domini, unus sit pater noster in caelis, nos autem omnes fratres simus, non immerito domini patrisque celsa nomina, quibus me honorandum, sed non honerandum, scuto a me veritatis repuli, congruentius pro his fratrem me nominans et conservus', trans. Scott James, *The Letters*, 106).

12 Anselm of Canterbury, *Epistola* 32, ed. Kohlenberger and Rochais, 112: 'De meo meritis domino, fide fratre, sollicitudine filio Mauritio'.

13 Hildegard of Bingen, *Epistola* 13, 30: 'filia mea Richardi, quam et filiam et matrem meam nomino'.

in a letter addressed to Rainald, abbot of Foigny, stated that sometimes a monk could be so spiritually healthy that he helped his abbot more than he was helped by him.<sup>14</sup> In such a case – Bernard told Rainald – the abbot should consider himself not as the monk's father but, rather, as his equal (*non patrem sed parem*), not as his abbot but as his fellow (*comitem, non abatem*). This text makes clear that the idea of an overthrow of the established hierarchical roles in the monastery (for the limited purpose of teaching and learning) is linked to the perception of spiritual maturity as something independent from age and even hierarchical rank. Moreover, it implies that each member of the monastic community, including the abbot, was supposed to continuously strive to progress and that the help of one's fellow-monks was crucial to this end.

The fact that each monk was expected to contribute to the life of the community is also shown by many letters of recommendation written to ask that the letter-bearer may be welcomed into a religious community or household. Such texts usually refer to the personal qualities of the man in question, to show that he could make himself useful.<sup>15</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, while sending a man to a community of regular canons, listed his merits and stated that he was going to be a comfort for the members of that community.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, in a letter addressed to an unknown Benedictine abbot, he stated that he was sending him two young monks who – he believed – would be of some use to him.<sup>17</sup> The abbot Peter the Venerable of Cluny, in a letter to Pope Innocent II, asked him to bless the decision of the abbot Natalis (Noël) of Rebas to retire to Cluny, and referred to how Natalis could be useful to Cluny<sup>18</sup>.

Of course, monks could offer and receive help in different fields, as Byrhtferth of Ramsey explicitly stated while painting an idealized picture of the future abbot Germanus in his *Life of Saint Oswald*:

[he] adopted aspects of good conduct from individual monks; that is to say, in the abbot he found wisdom; in the dean, goodness; in the prior

14 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola* 73, ed. Gastaldelli, 332: 'Si quis vero ita sanus est ut magis iuuet te quam iuuetur a te, huius te non patrem, sed parem, comitem, non abbatem agnoscas'.

15 Letters of recommendation of this type for women are, to my knowledge, extremely rare.

16 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola* 408, ed. Gastaldelli, 552: 'Commendamus ergo vobis eum, utpote nobis bene cognitum, et honeste morigeratum, et in litteris eruditum, postremo tamquam Dei servum, quem per Dei gratiam credo vobis futurum fidum solatium' ('I therefore commend him to you as one well known to all of us here, excellently behaved, and highly cultured; in fine, as a servant of God whom I believe will be by God's grace, a great comfort to you', trans. Scott James, *The Letters*, 507).

17 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola* 442, ed. Gastaldelli, 602: 'non inutiles vobis confidimus'.

18 Peter the Venerable, *Epistola* 92, 234: 'Cluniacensi tamen quae familiarius vestra est non inutilis esse poterit'.

he saw patience; in the librarian, an awareness of future events; in the cellarer, firm faith; in the precentor, certain hope; in the master of the school, perfect charity; in the professed monks, emulation of God; in the novices, love of God; and in the other monks inexpressible gifts.<sup>19</sup>

The fact that monks were supposed to help each other can be seen in many representations of interpersonal relationships, especially in connection with monastic conceptions of love and friendship,<sup>20</sup> since friends were supposed to help each other along the path of spiritual progress, acting as guardians of each other's soul.<sup>21</sup> It can be argued that according to the *Regula Benedicti* (the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, hereafter the Rule), such notions lay at the very core of the ideal of coenobitic life, especially in comparison with hermitic life: the monks were supposed to be like a well-disciplined army, where everyone helped and protected his neighbour and, at the same time, was helped and protected by him. In contrast, hermits were presented as people who, after a long probation in a monastery where they had been trained to fight against the devil through the help of their brothers, reached a condition where they no longer need to be helped by others.<sup>22</sup> In the twelfth century, the abbot Peter the Venerable cited this passage of the Rule in a letter to a hermit, declaring that a monk laboured at the same time for himself and for

19 Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi, pars tertia*, chap. 7, 66-67: 'partes bonitatis sumpsit in singulis fratribus: verbi gratia, in patre monasterii sapientiam repperit, in decano bonitatem invenit, in preposito patientiam vidit, in armario cognitionem futurarum rerum, in cellerario fidem firmam, in cantore spem certam, in magistro scale karitatem perfectam, in senioribus zelum Dei, in iunioribus amorem ipsius, in ceteris fratribus cetera inedicibilia dona'. I am very grateful to Katy Cubitt for bringing this passage to my attention.

20 It is often very difficult to distinguish between the expression of feelings of love or of friendship in high medieval religious contexts (see Bériou, 'L'avènement des maîtres de la Parole', 561). Love played a crucial role in processes of teaching and learning, see Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, 59-81.

21 For an introduction to the conceptions of monastic friendship, see Vasteenberghe, 'Amitié', coll. 500-529; McGuire, 'The Cistercians and the Transformation of Monastic Friendship', 1-63; McGuire, *Friendship and Community*; Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*; Fiske, 'Paradisus Homo Amicus', 436-459; Haseldine, 'Monastic Friendship', 349-394; and D'Acunto, 'Amicitia Monastica'.

22 *Regula Benedicti*, chap. 1, 4, ed. Venarde, 16-17: 'The second kind [of monks] are anachorites, that is, hermits, those no longer fresh in the fervor of monastic life but long tested in a monastery, who have learned, by now schooled with the help of many, to fight against the Devil. Well trained among a band of brothers for single combat in the desert, by now confident even without another's encouragement, they are ready, with God's help, to fight the vices of body and mind with hand and arm alone' ('deinde secundum genus est anachoritarum, id est heremitarum, horum qui non conversationis fervore novicio sed monasterii probatione diuturna, qui didicerunt contra diabolum multorum solacio iam docti pugnare. Et bene extracti fraterna ex acie ad singularem pugnam eremi, securi iam sine consolatione alterius, sola manu vel brachio contra vitia carnis vel cogitationum, Deo auxiliante, pugnare sufficiunt'). I lean on Bruce L. Venarde's translation but I adapt freely.

his fellow-monks ('laborant ibi singuli, et salutis suae insidiantes perimere, et coadiutores modis omnibus dispensare').<sup>23</sup> The notion of reciprocal help appears to be linked with the idea of equality, in particular in connection with military metaphors: it was often implied that reaching salvation was a matter of teamwork between equals. One important keyword in this sense is *invicem*, which can be translated, depending on the context, as either 'by turns' or 'reciprocally': monks were expected to obey each other, serve each other, and compete with each other in honour ('oboedire invicem, servire invicem, honore invicem praevenire').<sup>24</sup> This was supposed to mirror what the New Testament stated about the life of the very first Christian communities.<sup>25</sup>

Lastly, we can find attestations of the idea that, by helping a brother, a monk could actually learn and progress himself; in this sense, learning had an important reciprocal dimension. The Rule stated that when the abbot helped others, through his warnings, to correct themselves, he emerged himself freed from his own faults ('cum de monitionibus suis emendationem aliis subministrat, ipse efficitur a vitiis emendatus').<sup>26</sup> The Cistercian abbot Adam of Perseigne applied this idea directly to monastic education and, in his letter-treatise on the subject, he argued that friendly conversations between a master and his disciple were mutually beneficial: they helped the master in his task of correcting the disciple, the disciple in bearing the correction with more patience, and both in understanding the sacred texts.<sup>27</sup>

23 Peter the Venerable, *Epistola 20*, 31.

24 *Regula Benedicti*, chap. 71 (title): 'They Should Be Obedient to One Another' ('Ut oboedientes sibi sint invicem'), cap. 35, 1: 'The brothers should serve each other in turn' ('fratres sibi invicem serviant'), cap. 72, 4: 'Monks should practice this zeal with the most ardent love, that is "let them outdo each other in demonstrating honor" ('hunc ergo zelum ferventissimo amore exercent monachi, id est ut "honore invicem praeveniant"'), with reference to Rm. 12, 10 (also quoted in the Rule, 63, 17), in ed. Venarde 224-225, 126-127, and 226-227 respectively.

25 Io. 13:34: 'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another' ('mandatum novum do vobis ut diligatis invicem sicut dilexi vos ut et vos diligatis invicem'), Eph. 4:2: 'with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity' ('cum omni humilitate et mansuetudine, cum patientia, subportantes invicem in caritate'); Eph. 4:32: 'And be ye kind to one another, merciful, forgiving one another' ('estote autem invicem benigni, misericordes, donantes iniquitatem'); Ga. 5:13: 'serve one another' ('servite invicem'); Eph. 5:21: 'being subject to one another in the fear of Christ' ('subiecti invicem in timore Christi'); and Ja. 5:16: 'Confess therefore your sins to one another, and pray for one another' ('confitemini ergo alterutrum peccata vestra, et orate pro invicem').

26 *Regula Benedicti* 2, 40, ed. Venarde, 26-27.

27 Adam of Perseigne, *Epistola 5*, 118: 'nascitur etiam ex amica frequenti et honesta colloquutione commendabilis queque familiaritas, per qua magister efficitur ad corripiendum audacior, correptus ad disciplinam patientior, uterque ad intelligentiam Scripturarum eruditior'.

While the themes of co-discipleship and of reciprocal and mutual help between members of a monastic community are undoubtedly present in monastic sources, it could be objected that such declarations are purely theoretical and have little or nothing to do with daily life in medieval monasteries. The relationship between the theory and practice of learning is a delicate issue, of course, but it must be considered that distinguishing between the two is more difficult than it may seem at first glance. On the one hand, theoretical reflections were preserved (and written down in the first place) because they were believed to be of actual use in monastic life, while on the other hand, monastic practices are only attested to us by highly formalized written sources. Friendship letters are a good example of this, since one of the reasons why they could be circulated among a wide audience and preserved for posterity was because they offered positive (or, sometimes, negative) models of relationships and interactions, from which the readers were supposed to learn. For example, Peter the Venerable's letter collection contains many references to friendship relationships inside and outside the monastery, and the fact that such texts were included in the collection realized under his supervision suggests that the mistrust against friendship in the monastery, which had long characterized monastic culture,<sup>28</sup> had for the most part been overcome. Peter even played with the idea of a subversion of monastic hierarchy in a letter to his secretary and friend Peter of Poitiers, where he stated that, as abbot, he had authority over Peter and could command him to obey his wish but that, because of their friendship, he chose to respect his friend's desires (and not to order him to abandon his eremitic retreat). The privilege of friendship thus allowed Peter of Poitiers to put his wishes before those of this abbot, and this represented a violation of the established order, as Peter the Venerable jokingly reminded his friend ('tu ergo ordinem pervertisti')<sup>29</sup>. But the fact that this disruption was put on display in a letter intended for a wide audience suggests that the abbot of Cluny did not consider it as a real threat to the discipline of his monastery. On the contrary, he may have been proposing a model of monastic friendship founded on the idea that moral and spiritual likeness were much more important than age, or social or hierarchical rank, by describing his friend and secretary as 'michi vel moribus meis consimilem vel conformem'<sup>30</sup> and by pointing out his moral, intellectual, and spiritual qualities.

28 McGuire, *Friendship and Community*, p. xlii.

29 Peter the Venerable, *Epistola 58*, 184.

30 Peter the Venerable, *Epistola 58*, 181.

In comparison with the theoretical statements concerning the monks' duty to help each other, the descriptions of friendly relationships offer us some insights into actual practices of men and women helping each other – and, therefore, of horizontal learning. Peter the Venerable refers in his letters to his many friendly conversations with Peter of Poitiers (as well as with other people) and even lists the edifying themes that were addressed during these meetings.<sup>31</sup> By doing so, I believe that he was proposing such friendly *colloquia* as a useful tool for spiritual progress within the monastery. Many more examples of high medieval representations of friendly interactions as mutually beneficial could be given; a particularly interesting one for the purpose of the present article can be found in a letter by Bernard of Clairvaux, who told a friend that he wished to either profit from him or benefit him ('aut proficere ex te cupimus aut prodesse tibi').<sup>32</sup> Considering that *proficio* is perhaps the verb that most closely expressed the monastic conception of learning, the use of this expression is highly telling, since it clearly shows that interpersonal interactions were considered an important means of fostering personal improvement.

Friendship is of course attested in a wide variety of sources, and not solely by letters. To offer just one example, the sources that attest the life of Romuald of Ravenna (951-1027) grant remarkable attention to the friendly relationships that developed within Romuald's inner circle.<sup>33</sup> Both Peter Damian's *Life* and Bruno of Querfurt's *Life of the Five Brothers* illustrate how friendship provided mentorship and companionship for men who aspired to a new and stricter form of religious life: Romuald, the hermit Marinus, the abbot Guarinus of Saint Michael of Cuxa, the former doge of Venice Peter Orseolo, John Gradenigo, Bruno of Querfurt (usually called by his monastic name, Boniface), and Benedict of Benevento. Interactions and conversations between them are represented as an important means of spiritual direction.<sup>34</sup> Of course, such descriptions serve the purpose of

31 For example, 'the blindness of the human heart and its hardness, the snares of various sins, the many traps of demons, the abyss of the judgment of God' ('de cordis humani caecitate atque duritia, de diversis peccatorum laqueis, de variis demonum insidiis, de abyssio iudiciorum dei'), in Peter the Venerable, *Epistola 58*, 181, English translation in McGuire, *Friendship and Community*, 260).

32 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola 107*, ed. Gastaldelli, 500.

33 Tabacco, *Spiritualità e cultura*, 170.

34 To give just a few examples: 'Benedict became accustomed to that sacred community [that of Peter Orseolo, John Gradenigo, and Guarinus of Saint Michael of Cuxa] and – in order to not wonder about following his own whims – thought, not foolishly, of living in a cell. In truth the mature John while instructing him in the ways of salvation, upholding humility ascribed the advice about life and the heavenly words that he himself gave to the discernment and perfection

painting a chain of transmission of spiritual charisma, but it cannot be denied that the informal collaboration of a few exceptional individuals was often an important factor for the creation and successful development of new religious groups.

Even if friendship is a popular theme in twelfth-century monastic sources, many of its theoretical basis can be traced back to many centuries earlier: an influential text for monasticism, John Cassian's *Collationes*, described a particularly important friendship of the author's youth, explaining that the conversations that he had with his friend were useful to both of them to advance in their moral training and in the understanding of the Scriptures. For example, thoughts that one developed on one's own could be revealed as dangerous through shared reasoning; therefore, Cassian and his friend relied on each other's judgement as an important protection against the snares of the devil.<sup>35</sup> Cassian also offered his own definition of friendship,

of master Romuald' ('Huius sacro collegio sepius iungi Benedictus iste consuevit et, ne in suo arbitrio erraret, vivere in cella non stulte cogitavit. Senex vero Iohannes humilitatem custodiens, dum salutem doceret, vite consilia et caelestia verba, quae sibi dabat, de discretione et perfectione magistri Romaldi descendere fatebatur', in Bruno of Querfurt, *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, 717-718); 'he [Romuald] aimed to visit his associate John (whom he had not seen for a long time) in person and revive the interaction with him' ('ut long tempore non visum Iohannem collegam presentia visitaret et colloquio animaret', in Bruno of Querfurt, *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, 718) and 'every time they [Benedict and John] saw each other with their chaste bodies, everytime they met to talk – since because of the sincere affection of their souls they were always together – [...] ('quociens se castis corporibus videre, quociens ad loquendum convenere, qui sinceris affectibus animorum semper simul fuere, [...]', in Bruno of Querfurt, *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, 729).

35 John Cassian, *Collationes*, 16, chap. 10, 448-450: 'Memini namque, cum me adhuc adhaerere consorti aetas iunior hortaretur, huiusmodi nobis intellegentiam vel in moralibus disciplinis vel in scripturis sacris frequenter insertam, ut nihil ea verius nihilque rationabilius crederemus. Sed cum in unum convenientes sententias nostras promere coepissemus, quaedam communi examinatione discussa primum ab altero falsa ac noxia notabantur, mox deinde ut perniciose communi pronuntiata iudicio damnabantur: quae in tantum prius infusa a diabolo velut luce fulgebant, ut facile potuissent generare discordiam, nisi praeceptum seniorum veluti divinum quoddam oraculum custoditum ab omni nos contentione revocasset, quo ab illis legali quadam sanctione praescriptum est, ut neuter nostrum plus iudicio suo quam fratris crederet, si numquam vellet diaboli calliditate deludi' ('For I remember, that when my youthful age suggested to me to cling to a partner, thoughts of this sort often mingled with our moral training and the Holy Scriptures, so that we fancied that nothing could be truer or more reasonable: but when we came together and began to produce our ideas, in the general discussion which was held, some things were first noted by the others as false and dangerous, and then presently were condemned and pronounced by common consent to be injurious; though before they had seemed to shine as if with a light infused by the devil, so that they would easily have caused discord, had not the charge of the Elders, observed like some divine oracle, restrained us from all strife, that charge; namely, whereby it was ordered by them almost with the force of a law, that neither of us should trust to his own judgments more than his brother's, if he wanted never to be deceived by the

explaining that, while it was possible to show charity towards everyone, there existed a particular kind of affection that could only be shown to a limited number of people connected with each other by the equality (*parilitas*) of good customs and virtues.<sup>36</sup> Once again the notion of equality is crucial to the conception of friendship, and Cassian's definition may have represented a source of influence for the development of monastic notions of friendship, where the theme of spiritual and moral equality is often important.<sup>37</sup>

Next to sources discussing friendship relationships, other kind of texts can be used to try and reconstruct monastic practices of horizontal and shared learning, especially if one tries to read between the lines, to discern things that are not explicitly described and yet are implied. For example, various sources inform us on the special roles that monks and nuns could be called to perform in their communities, such as cellarer, porter, gardener, and so on. Each of these roles required the acquisition of specific skills, and the little evidence that we have, together with the scarcity of information concerning this kind of training in normative sources, suggests that the acquisition of practical skills in the monastery often took place in an informal and shared way, 'by doing' and by imitating others and thanks to their help (for example, their corrections) rather than through formal teaching.

Peter the Venerable recalled in one of his letters that when his mother, Raingard, who was a nun at Marcigny, was chosen as *celleraria* (the person responsible for the provisions and food of the monastery), she had to learn the art of cooking, in which (presumably, because she was a noblewoman) she was inexperienced.<sup>38</sup> We are not told who taught Raingard to cook, but it was probably the previous *celleraria* (if she was still alive and at the monastery) or her fellow-nuns, or both. If Raingard learned from her fellow-nuns, this would make for a clear case of horizontal learning, and even if the previous *celleraria* was involved, Raingard's interaction with her would probably have been on equal terms, considering Raingard's age, social rank, and the spiritual gifts that she possessed, according to her son's portrait.

craft of the devil', Engl. transl. in *Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian*, ed. Schaff, Wace, 453).

36 John Cassian, *Collationes*, 16, chap. 14, 454: 'Illam igitur caritatem, quae dicitur ἀγάπη, possibile est omnibus exhiberi. [...] Διάθεσις autem, id est adfectio, paucis admodum et his qui vel parilitate morum vel virtutum societate conexi exhibetur' ('It is possible then for all to show that love which is called ἀγάπη [...]. But διάθεσις, i.e. affection is shown to but a few and those who are united to us by kindred dispositions or by a tie of goodness', in *Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian*, ed. Schaff, Wace, 454).

37 See McGuire, *Friendship and Community*, 77-82.

38 Peter the Venerable, *Epistola* 53, 165: 'inexperta coquinae disciplinam addiscere cogeatur'.

Walafrid Strabo's famous poem about his vegetable garden begins with an explicit reference to the fact that he was not taught by anyone how to cultivate the garden, nor did he learn it by reading books; rather, he claims to have learned everything through experience.<sup>39</sup> Even if Walafrid declares that he learned everything on his own, one may wonder if he did not benefit from at least some help of his fellow-monks – and in any case, other gardeners in his position certainly did. In fact, while we possess little information concerning the role of the person or persons responsible for the care of the monastic *hortus*,<sup>40</sup> and even less on their training, we can put forth some hypotheses based on the similarity with other practical tasks of monastic life. We know that monks were supposed to take turns in the kitchen,<sup>41</sup> which means that they would all acquire some skills there, and we know that, according to the Rule, if the porter of the monastery needed help, he was given a younger monk as an assistant.<sup>42</sup> The specific reference to the helper's young age may be linked to the fact that he was supposed to help the older porter (who, according to the Rule, had to be a wise older monk, *senes sapiens*) with the tasks that required physical strength, but it is also possible that the 'assistant porter', having learned the duties connected with the office, was expected, one day, to replace the previous porter.

The training of medieval monks as scribes has received much more attention: it has been pointed out that manuscript production was often a collaborative work<sup>43</sup> and that, since writing was a craft, 'as was true for other medieval crafts, it was taught and practiced in a group setting, with the scriptorium as its workshop space',<sup>44</sup> which leaves ample opportunity for reciprocal help between peers. In addition, writing represented a valuable craft that could be the subject of knowledge exchanges between monasteries: monks could learn new skills from scribes who belonged to other monasteries and teach them, in turn, what they knew.<sup>45</sup>

39 Walafrid Strabo, *Hortulus*, 335-350: 'hæc non sola mihi patefecit opinio famæ vulgaris, quæsitæ libris nec lectio priscis, sed labor et studium, quibus otia logna dierum Postposui, expertum rebus docuere probatis'.

40 See Meyvaert, *The Medieval Monastic Garden*, 23-53.

41 *Regula Benedicti* 35, 1, ed. Vendarde, 126-127: 'Fratres sibi invicem serviant et nullus excusetur a coquinae officio'.

42 *Regula Benedicti* 66, 5, ed. Venarde, 214-215: 'Qui portarius si indiget solacio, iuniorem fratrem accipiat'.

43 Spilling, *La collaboration dans la production de l'écrit médiéval*.

44 Wiethaus, 'Collaborative Literacy', 36.

45 See McKitterick, 'Continuity and Innovation', 19, with reference to the paleographical evidence collected by Hoffmann on the mobility of scribes in the tenth century, Hoffmann, *Buchkunst*, 96.

Lastly, in an overview of the sources to which we can turn for information about the practices of horizontal learning in monastic environments, we should not forget the importance of looking at negative examples. The idea that monks who had broken the rules of the monastery should be isolated from the rest of the community derives not only from the wish to administer a punishment but also, crucially, from the need to prevent them from corrupting others.<sup>46</sup> In fact, if a monk talked or sent a message to the brother who had been excommunicated, he was to be equally punished,<sup>47</sup> and this was not due simply to the fact that the excommunicated monk had to sulk in isolation. Someone was actually sent to console him, but it had to be an experienced monk, one who could lead the brother onto the right path without risk of being led by him on the wrong one.<sup>48</sup> Clearly, monks were believed to influence each other through their social interactions. This can also be seen in the Rule's discussion of the case of foreign monks who visited the monastery: bad monks were not to be welcomed, lest they corrupt the community, whereas good monks were to be convinced to stay, so that they could teach others by their example.<sup>49</sup>

The few examples that have been mentioned so far should make clear that the theoretical roots of the notion of horizontal learning are not unique to the monastic world: humility is crucial to all of Christian spirituality, the notion of co-discipleship can be traced back to Augustine, and the idea of reciprocal help between peers has a neotestamentary foundation. Moreover, attestations of horizontal learning practices in the High Middle Ages can be found in non-monastic sources as well: for example, the representation of friendly exchanges, and especially of conversations, as mutually beneficial

46 *Regula Benedicti* chap. 23, 24, 25 in general, and chap. 28, 6-8 in particular (ed. Venarde, 110-111): 'But if he is not healed in this way, then the abbot must use the knife of amputation, as the apostle says, "Banish the evil one from your midst", and again "If a faithless man is leaving, let him leave", lest one diseased sheep infect the whole flock' ('Quod si nec isto modo sanatus fuerit, tunc iam utatur abbas ferro abscisionis, ut ait apostolus: "Auferte manum ex voibus" et iterum "Infidelis si discedit, discedat", ne una ovis morbida omnem gregem contagiet idem', with reference to 1 Cor. 5: 13 and 1 Cor. 7: 15 respectively).

47 *Regula Benedicti* chap. 26, 1, ed. Venarde, 104-105: 'Si quis frater praesumpserit sine iussionem abbatis fratri excommunicato quolibet modo se iungere aut loqui cum eo vel mandatum ei dirigere, similem sortiatur excommunicationis vindictam'.

48 *Regula Benedicti* chap. 27, 2, ed. Venarde, 106-107: 'Therefore, in every way like a wise physician, he [the abbot] must send in *senpectae*, that is, wise senior brothers, who should privately, as it were, comfort the weaver brother and urge him to the satisfaction of humility' ('Et ideo uti debet omni modo ut sapiens medicus: immittere quasi occultos consolatores Sympaetas, id est, seniores sapientes fratres, qui quasi secrete consolentur fratrem fluctuantem et provocent ad humilitatis').

49 *Regula Benedicti* chap. 61, 9, ed. Venarde, 196-197: 'eius exemplo alii erudiantur'.

for one's spiritual progress can be found in the correspondence of the twelfth-century members of the secular clergy such as John of Salisbury and Peter of Blois.<sup>50</sup> Lastly, shared and horizontal learning often answered practical needs in religious communities which strived to be as self-sufficient as possible – a characteristic which may apply to canonries as well.

We can therefore ask ourselves whether there exists a peculiarity of horizontal learning in the monastic world. The comparison between monks and canons who practiced communal living<sup>51</sup> appears particularly promising in this respect. In fact, while these two groups had a lot in common, the fact that the latter performed pastoral duties had repercussions not only on the practice of learning (priests needed to learn things that monks did not, and vice versa) but also on its theorization. Monks were supposed to be permanent learners, not teachers, whereas the concern for the edification of one's neighbour has long been considered typical of religious men who had care of souls.<sup>52</sup> Gaëlle Jeanmart, in her study about docility, concluded that early medieval Benedictine monastic legislation explicitly condemned the attention to the other, since the monk was only supposed to be focused on himself.<sup>53</sup> While this may seem to make horizontal learning impossible in monastic communities, the examples that have been mentioned show that things are more nuanced than they seem at first sight. The insistence on the fact that the monk was supposed to be a learner and not a teacher

50 For John of Salisbury, see, for example, *Epistola 95*, 146: 'Cum saepe, rarius tamen quam vellem, litteras vestras receperim, nullarum gratior fuit adventus quam illarum quae michi sub domesticae eruditionis auctoritate necessitatem virtutis indixerunt. Gaudeo namque quod de thesauro scientiae vestrae nunc tandem probitatis exemplum, quod vobis reservabatis, et michi communicatum est. Potero quidem hiis et similibus animari ad fortia et, Domino provehente, ad altiora conscendere'. For Peter of Blois, see, for example, *Epistola 14*: 'gratias ago gratiae vestrae quantas possum quia, quandiu conversatus sum inter vos, me fraterno coluistis affectu: nec minus mihi apud vos effecit gratia, quam apud alios diuturna nutriturae conditio, aut natura. Si quando equitabamus, eratis lucerna pedibus meis, eratis mihi pro vehiculo in via. Si autem nostris indulgebatur iumentis Sabbatum (homines enim in curia sabbatizare non vidi, unde et in ea parte melior est conditio iumentorum) taedium illud, quod frequenter afficit curiales, vestra mihi dulcissima colloquia furabantur: eratisque solatium et exultatio mea in via, in camera, in capella' and *Epistola 150* 'diligio enim vos in Christi visceribus, et quidquid ad aedificationem vestram in ea scriptum est, non de odio curialium, sed de sincera charitate processit', respectively vol. 1, 43 and vol. 2, 82.

51 In the essay contained in this volume, Neslihan Şenocak has called attention to the fact that, at least in Italy, canons often practised communal living without necessarily following a Rule and belonging to an order of regular canons.

52 See especially Walker Bynum, 'The Spirituality of Regular Canons', 22-35 and Walker Bynum, *Docere verbo et exemplo*, 1-8. where she also gives an overview of the scholarly literature on the subject.

53 Jeanmart, *Généalogie de la docilité*, 226.

actually led some authors to use the above-mentioned topos *non patrem sed parem* and the notion of co-discipleship.

It must also be considered that the distinction between monastic and canonical spirituality is not always straightforward. It can be very difficult to distinguish between monastic and canonical practices in the twelfth century, especially in newer communities.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, each author was influenced by his or her unique career path: for example, the Cistercian abbot Adam of Perseigne was first a regular canon, then a black monk, and only lastly a Cistercian, and indeed his thought seems to contain elements traditionally associated with the spirituality of regular canons next to monastic elements.<sup>55</sup> Lastly, ideas circulated widely beyond institutional boundaries: the *De institutione novitiorum* of Hugh of Saint Victor, written to illustrate the formation of regular canons, enjoyed great success in monastic as well as mendicant communities,<sup>56</sup> and the *De claustro animae* composed by the canon Hugh of Fouillooy may have addressed with intentional vagueness all the 'claustrales', both monks and canons.<sup>57</sup>

In general, it must be observed that, for any kind of religious community, a variety of factors influenced the extent to which horizontal learning could be present. One such factor was undoubtedly the age of the recruits: while communities that welcomed children were more likely to develop models of teaching and learning in which pupils had an essentially passive role,<sup>58</sup> groups that only accepted adult converts, such as canons but also Cistercians, seem to have given a more active role to the pupils.<sup>59</sup> This is easily understandable, since the 'pupils' could be learned men, capable of offering a valuable contribution to the processes of co-construction of knowledge. Newer communities might also have been more open to horizontal learning because their educational practices had not yet been formalized and institutionalized, leaving more room for informal and shared ways of teaching and learning.

Social and religious ranks also influenced horizontal learning processes in a decisive way: at a top level, among the elites, there seems to have been more room for peer-to-peer knowledge exchanges – for example, during

54 Grégoire, *La vocazione sacerdotale*, 38-48 ; Walker Bynum, 'The Spirituality of Regular Canons', 36-46 ; Leclercq, 'La spiritualité des chanoines', 117-135.

55 As I have argued in Long, 'Entre spiritualité monastique et canoniale', 247-270.

56 Goy, *Die Überlieferung der Werke Hugos von St. Viktor*, 367, who proved that most manuscripts attesting the *De institutione* were produced in monasteries, and Zinn, 'Vestigia victorina', 405-431.

57 Leclercq, 'La spiritualité des chanoines', 129-133.

58 Cochelin, 'Beside the Book', 21-34.

59 See Leclercq, 'La communauté formatrice', 3-21 and Neslihan Şenocak's essay in this volume.

friendly meetings between an abbot and his friends. This impression may be the result of the fact that interactions between the members of the elites are recorded in writing more often than those which took place between ordinary monks or canons, but all in all it seems likely that the members of the elites enjoyed more freedom to congregate with their friends. In this sense, horizontal learning was hardly egalitarian, and it may actually reveal profound inequalities within the community; however, as we have seen, it could also cut across established hierarchies, when an abbot placed himself, even for a brief moment, on an equal footing with one of his monks, to learn from him. The interplay between horizontal learning and social and religious hierarchy deserves detailed study, which will allow scholars to determine whether and to what extent horizontal learning and its notions of spiritual and intellectual equality were perceived to be a threat to the order of the monastery. The examples mentioned above suggest that, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, many medieval authors accepted the idea that the benefits of friendship could outweigh its risks if the people involved managed to cultivate a peculiar kind of 'spiritual' (pure, disinterested) friendship, which was different from utilitarian friendship. In other words, friendship was acceptable for a moral elite, which often coincided with the social elite that held positions of pre-eminence in the monasteries.

Lastly, teaching and learning practices were also influenced by the type of knowledge that was to be transmitted or developed. Grammatical training probably called for a more formal and vertical type of teaching, whereas other skills – such as cooking or managing a vegetable garden, as we have seen – were often learned in a more informal and shared way. Participation in group activities and imitation of one's peers was certainly crucial to allow the monks to develop practical skills, from manuscript production to singing. Moreover, the fact that medieval education always had an important moral and behavioural dimension meant that individuals acquired behavioural patterns and mindsets thanks to other people's examples: the master, who taught at the same time by word by example;<sup>60</sup> but also one's co-learners who, as we have seen, could help each other to progress spiritually and morally, through reciprocal advice and correction and by offering each other patterns of good behaviour.

In conclusion, horizontal learning cannot be considered characteristic of a specific kind of religious order: rather, it could be present in any type

60 See Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*, Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, and Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, Münster-Swendsen, 'Medieval "Virtuosity"', 43-64 and Steckel, 'Charisma and Expertise', 641-680.

of community, in different forms and circumstances, and always in combination with more vertical kinds of teaching. In the case of the monastic world, we can observe, both in theory and in practice, a coexistence of two opposite tendencies in teaching and learning: one toward authority and obedience; and one toward co-discipleship, reciprocity, and mutual help. This coexistence can be traced back to the multiple sources of inspiration for monastic culture: as it has been observed by Salvatore Pricoco, while the *Regula Quattuor Patrum*, according to the Egyptian model, called for a monocratic and 'vertical' power structure in the monastery, Basilian and Augustinian communities attributed a greater value to 'horizontal' relationships between brothers.<sup>61</sup> The essays in this volume offer examples of the coexistence, in high medieval monastic communities, of horizontal and vertical forms of teaching and learning and their interplay, which makes the dynamics of learning unique to each environment.

### About the author

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61 Pricoco, 'Introduzione', xxiii.

