

THE FOURTH WALL IN CLASS AND THE PROXEMICS OF THE BODY IN TRADITIONAL AND DISTANCE LEARNING

LA QUARTA PARETE A LEZIONE E LA PROSSEMICA DEL CORPO NELLA DIDATTICA FRONTALE E DIGITALE

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Abstract:

The article investigates the issue of the age-old separation between the teaching staff and learners in the classrooms. It is a lack of proximity and sometimes also of relationality that brings us back to the importance of bodies in the classroom space, and above all requires us to rethink new models of distance learning so far understood as a xerox copy of traditional teaching and not as a hermeneutic rethinking of it.

L'articolo indaga la questione della secolare separazione tra corpo docente e discente nelle aule. Si tratta di una mancanza di prossimità e talvolta anche di relazionalità che ci riporta all'importanza dei corpi nello spazio aula e soprattutto ci impone di ripensare modelli nuovi della didattica a distanza sinora intesa come una copia conforme della didattica tradizionale e non come ripensamento ermeneutico.

Key-words: hermeneutics - distance learning - democratic school - ecosystem - didactic direction

Parole-chiave: ermeneutica – didattica a distanza – scuola democratica – ecosistema – regia didattica

1. The body and mind in the classroom

An old joke about school goes more or less like this: in class those present can answer "present" to the roll call, but those absent cannot answer "absent". Someone else needs to do it. It is necessary for someone else to take charge of the partner and answer "absent" in his name, assuming the responsibility of interceding "on behalf of". After all, responsibility means answering, becoming "guarantor or backer for someone else", as Natoli explains (2010: 111).

Then perhaps one is never completely absent from school, at least until someone replies "absent" for another person, dragging them into the teaching scene.

Students dropping out of school do not happen on the occasion of prolonged absences, but when we no longer look and ask for them, as if they were missing bodies, which it would be useless to look for: precisely, school drop-outs perhaps are just this, even the nomenclature can be traced back to the dimension of bodies that cannot be found and about which no one asks anymore, and about which no one answers anymore.

This dynamic of calling the body, of evoking it and of dragging it to the center of the classroom even in absentia is actually very ancient and pertains to the didactic gesture tout-court. In fact, it seems that Plato asked about his pupil Aristotle when he did not see him in the classrooms, the corridors, or under the portico of the Academy (Berti, 2011): «where is "the mind" today, what happened to it?» the philosopher wondered, and in this appellation "the mind", a sort of synecdoche, the part for the whole, which sums up all Aristotelian intelligence, there is the synthesis of the awareness of the master who knows he needs the disciple, his questions, his interruptions, his doubts, even his criticisms, for being and for being there, and not the other way around.

The body and the physical presence have a key importance within the space/classroom: this importance has been explored by so much scientific literature (Damiano, 2013: 96; Baldi, 2021;

Rivoltella, 2021) which has turned its attention to the physicality, gestures and posture that the body conveys and reveals.

And if it is true that it often revolves around the teaching staff, wondering how much this gesture can affect the communicative fluidity of the lesson, it is also true that we need to ask ourselves about the student body understood as a whole and as a singularity, about the proxemics of the male and female pupils because it would give answers to questions about the distance between them and the teacher as a communicative fact.

Of course, the teacher's eyes and gaze are important and convey a very precise non-verbal communication within the teaching space, and the variables depend on the position assumed and which leads back to the non-secondary question about the following coordinates: from where do we look at the male and female student so that educational relationality can be established? From the top of the chair? Or going down among the benches? How open is the visual space so that it doesn't feel uncomfortable, scary or intimidating? And then, how important is gesture, or what does our teaching staff do while the class works individually or in groups? How does it move, does it enter the hermeneutical circle or does it interrupt it with its own presence and gait?

However, the body indicator that concerns the teacher's posture reveals epistemic evidence: it often appears separate from the posture of students.

As if between the body of teachers and that of students there was a fourth wall.

2. The teacher *deus ex machina*

“Fourth wall” is an expression that indicates, in the theatrical vocabulary, a sort of imaginary wall that separates the stalls from the stage, through which the spectator observes the action that takes place in the work represented as something other than himself, as a representation, or as fictio (Allegrì, 2012). It is “fourth” because it completes the three walls that structurally make up and delimit the perimeter of the stage. Now, this idea that the actors are beyond a wall that divides them from the audience was formulated in the essay *De la poésie dramatique* (1758) by Denis Diderot who invited the actors to act while ignoring the audience, as if the curtain had ever got up, so that they could walk through the performance as if they were not on the stage. More than a century later, the playwright Jean Jullien (1890) would better define the nature and motivations of the fourth wall, explaining that the actor must act «as if he were at home, without worrying about the emotions it arouses, the applause and dissents». The phrase “breaking the fourth wall” indicates on the other hand the reversal of this consolidated scenic tradition: with the metaphorical elimination of the fourth wall, the actors instead address the audience, they question it, they explicitly look at it in their acting.

It was Luigi Pirandello who inaugurated the elimination of this ideal boundary that separated stage and audience, acting and truth, fictio and reality, to allow the theater to be an expression of verisimilitude as close as possible to humanity and not separate from it.

This profound Pirandellian idea, it must be stressed, was not immediately accepted: the staging of Six characters in search of an author which marks the first breaking of the fourth wall at the Teatro Valle in Rome in 1921 and which saw the actors even wandering around in the stalls, was received by critics and the public as a “crazy thing”. At the cry of “madhouse” Pirandello left the theater on the evening of the premiere¹, strongly criticized because, evidently, too progressive, a bearer of confusion and/or continuity between the audience and the actors (considered a sort of scandalous promiscuity) as it is capable of directly involving the spectator who becomes, even against her will, part of the act represented, subject of the scene, of the text and of the narrative *telos*.

Likewise, even face-to-face lessons are made up of bodies, dialogue and interaction plots, and above all, for learners and teachers, the didactic scene is like the construction of a text shared with roles that

1 «L'idea nazionale», 11 May 1921.

are distinct but which all belong to a very ancient ritual of which everyone knows the liturgies, because they are an integral part of our collective experience.

Since the time of the Greek philosophical schools, which marked the genesis of Western knowledge, and then gradually up to the medieval *lectio*, the scholastic ritual foresees a scene (the classroom), a leading actor (the teacher) and an audience (the students).

And often the fourth wall is interposed between them, with teachers who recite not so much and not only as if there were no one in front of them, regardless of the students' state of mind (Galimberti, 2009), but above all, as Popper (1974) said, teachers who give answers to questions never asked, not inclined to listen, in a school where communication is unidirectional, within a system built to provide pre-packaged answers that tends to anesthetize the spontaneous and vital curiosity of students.

Yet questions are the first and fundamental tool for knowledge navigators and they are also an indispensable premise for the construction of a productive and effective classroom relationality, based on mutual recognition. They represent the simplest way to demonstrate that we are really listening and motivated to get in touch: the well-posed question that opens the lesson in fact ignites the desire to know and places the students at center stage.

And probably Plato wanted to have Aristotle in class perhaps because he realized that without the awkward questions of his Macedonian pupil, so concrete in his philosophical posture with respect to Platonic idealism, the lesson of that day would have fizzled-out.

The school that provides answers according to an immutable script, where one enters the classroom starting out “today we are talking about the first Punic war” without asking what could be the connection between the concrete life of our students and a war of 2200 years ago, without, for example, taking a newspaper page with the chronicle of one of today's wars, from which one can reasonably expect that someone can ask “what is war?”, lighting the fuse of curiosity, that is a school that has not broken the fourth wall and has not triggered the fluid mixing process that characterizes knowledge. But above all it is a school that still doesn't know how to sacrifice the rituality of programs, rhythms, deadlines, which play such a large part in the school liturgy, in favor of the inquiries and of the challenges posed by the students. In favor of their irruption on the educational scene as if it were the theater scene, leaving it to the teachers to finally go down to the stalls to meet their gaze, in a game of proximity that still today makes many shout “crazy things” if it is true that the so-called progressive school has always caused perplexity and fierce criticism, from Don Milani onwards², until today (Mastrocola, Ricolfi, 2021).

There is no doubt that if we want to talk about the “scholastic damage of the progressive school” it would perhaps be attributable in the first instance precisely to the large number of boys and girls, of boys and girls that we lose in terms of integration, inclusion, motivation, socialization and educational relationship.

2 The considerations would be many. Here it suffices to say that one of the most frequent criticisms leveled at Don Milani's pedagogical action is that of having carried forward the educational project of a school that was too permissive and ideologically antiselective. In his programmatic manifesto Letter to a teacher, in the Italy of authoritarian schooling, he peremptorily states that “compulsory school cannot fail students” because “failing someone is like shooting in a bush. Maybe it was a boy, maybe a hare. It will be seen at leisure” and this for Don Milani coincided with his ideal of giving more to those who start with less, always valuing the person, his experience, his history, in a Christian pedagogical model that gives credit to the other, to the neighbor, especially if the neighbor is the student. There have also been other breaks in the traditional script, always of method and merit: the abolition of the textbook (which offers pre-packaged and pre-constituted answers, and which truly transforms the lesson into a liturgy that is impossible to modify) to in favor of the use of dictionaries to deepen the language, the first tool of knowledge, and in favor of concrete experiences of problem-solving and cooperative-learning. The deconstruction of the chair in favor of circular activity through the daily reading of the newspapers and through a shared planning that truly created an unprecedented flipped-classroom, meant that in the school of don Milani the educational scene was always curved «on the attention from knowledge to the person, from all-encompassing programs to the baggage of necessary and starting knowledge of the boy who had to free himself from shyness [...]» (Martinelli, 2007). After all, Lorenzo's constructivism is contemporary with that of Bruner and other thinkers who agree on the fact that the growth process lies in the autonomy and in the breaking of the pre-established schemes.

But this dispersion of bodies, minds and intelligences does not lie in the more or less presumed progressism of the school of recent decades: this dispersion perhaps lies precisely in the betrayal of the inclusive, farsighted and audacious programs of don Milani and of all authentically democratic schools. This dispersion lies in the continuous resistance that opposes any form of breaking the fourth wall which generates disinterest, extraneousness, distance and inequality because it continues undaunted to propose the *ex cathedra* educational model, with the teacher who does not pierce the didactic scene by reaching to the audience, like the actors in Pirandello's scenography, and does not decrease the distance by inaugurating a new proxemics, but rather acts as a sort of *deus ex machina* that occasionally falls on the scene to impose its authority, to quell the chaos and/or to supervise³.

3. The ecosystem approach

The studies of Urie Bronfenbrenner (2010) show how an ecological model (Ecological systems theory) could favor the deconstruction of the classroom environment and therefore the definitive removal of the fourth wall through a relationality composed of concentric centers increasingly curved towards reciprocal interaction. Metaphor aside, the fourth wall could finally be abandoned for successive reciprocal approximations, for an ever more evident closeness that is realized on both sides: to use Pirandello's scheme again, not only do the actors move towards the audience but also the audience moves towards the actors, in a dynamic of reciprocity. Bronfenbrenner speaks of a *microsystem* in terms of minimal interpersonal units, such as a pattern of shared activities. It is clear that it is characterized by proximity: the class group, for example, is a *microsystem*. From the union of this with other *microsystems* we have the *mesosystem* which refers to situations in which the subject participates in the interconnection, up to the ecosystem constituted by a broad interconnection directed by the subject himself.

If the institutional choices around the school reality followed this paradigm, we would have a model of mutual cum-participation in the didactic scene that would break the rigidity of any generational and relational separation: for example, the Presidential Decree n.122 of June 22, 2009 adequately formalized a important methodology and theory of assessment extremely attentive to learning processes with educational purposes «and identification of the potential and shortcomings of each pupil». What does this mean? It means that shortly thereafter, the theoretical and procedural track of the self-assessment processes by the students would be opened, finally considered important for an actual (and not just declared) educational success. Here: shifting the dynamics towards the students, enhancing their potential and personalities, putting an instrument in their hands that until then had been strongly in the hands of the teacher, like an orchestra conductor who hands over the baton, inevitably promotes a process *transformative* in the direction of a progressive empowerment of the class to the point of pushing it towards performing a “didactic direction” so that the learning environment becomes ever more stimulating and ever more suitable for everyone's needs.

It is clear then that a “vertical” vision of the teacher/pupil/pupil relationship still represents a major obstacle to this model of democratic participation.

4. Beyond the *monocratic* teacher: distance learning

3 The figure of the *deus ex machina* lies in the scenographic structure of Greek tragedy especially in Euripides and was attributable to the unexpected intervention of the god who, positioned on a sort of machine made of ropes and winches or cranes, was lowered onto the scene to resolve the narrative intertwining when it becomes chaotic: the actor who represented the god was lowered from elsewhere and then undisturbed, with the same suddenness, left the scene (Baldry, 2021).

Somehow in the vertical vision there is the risk of including the dimension of theatricality in the acting out of the teacher, as if he were the leading actor, the director and even the producer, in the manner of some Hollywood stars.

We have seen it in all its evidence with the DAD, or in the experience that has shown in all its historical drama, linked to the health emergency, the fallibility of obsolete models and the fragility of an ecosystem model that is struggling to establish itself. At the same time the importance of the body in the classroom context and its ability to establish proximity and relationship has become very clear: in distance teaching, the micro-systemic dimension has disappeared in the impossibility, for example, of rediscovering the main pattern of classroom relationality. With digital lessons, classmates have been zipped to mere thumbnails and names on the screen, and this has necessarily transformed and modified the relationship with others and with the self, with the reality of the class and its representations.

Paradoxically, it is precisely in distance learning that the importance of the body can be measured in the didactic dimension, both in the physical/analogical sense and in the metaphysical sense, because distance learning cancels the heaviness of the body, its presence, and makes us evanescent on the screen, transforming us into nick names.. And precisely this disappearance of the body has produced in the DAD a sort of regression to the ancient and *monocratic* school, with an evident and strident hiatus if we think that this regression has crept into the contemporaneity of the new means of communication, as if to say that it will not be a software or an algorithm or a good e-learning platform to change the school, but the intentionality, the will (or the good will) of all the actors involved. In fact, if we reflect on the two most common mistakes made when, for the first time, we tried distance learning, we would see that the first mistake was to have understood and practiced it simply as extended teaching, a sort of teaching augmented, a substitute for augmented virtual reality. The second mistake was that of having understood the teacher, who plans the form and content of the lesson remotely, as a sort of multifaceted professional figure, versatile and flexible, but which is actually non-existent. A mythical character halfway between a shaman capable of capturing and predicting the moods and intentions of the assembly/class seated in front of and beyond the screen, then a set designer capable of modeling the digital environment, a light and sound technician, and finally a protagonist, and also a non-protagonist, of what in the end is understood not as a remote lesson, but as a one-way liturgy or a short film valid for a festival or an arthouse competition.

In reality these are two errors linked by a double and triple knot that we would like to try to untie here also to lighten the psychic, emotional, relational load that accompanied the first tests of a distance learning implementation⁴, understood as an author's proof or a scenic representation, almost a fictio, and which involved a heavy depersonalization (and therefore an alienating experience, at least as it was lived in different circumstances). We have often understood the DAD as a temporary situation which had the sole purpose of entertaining the audience and which inevitably transformed the teacher into an entertainer capable of mediating and attracting, with special, fluorescent effects and improbable rabbits pulled from top hats, a demanding but potentially mute public, understood at most as a chemical/emotional reagent of possible and unpredictable reactions, and never understood as co-director of the educational and creative act of the didactic gesture.

The video *reductio* of a lesson, to give an example of the first and immediate application of remote teaching, seems to have caused a *reductio* by the teacher in favor of the machine: yet the translation

4 I'm referring here to the first sociological and statistical surveys which brought to light, at the end of the 2019/2020 school year characterized by the intensive, massive, sometimes forced use of distance learning in every school, an excess of burnout, a greater and more widespread fatigue on the part of teachers, an accumulation of stress due to the frantic search for the most valid and effective solution, and due to the panic that can arise in the awareness of being dangerously late (on contents, on programs, on catch-ups) for having retraced, unintentionally, paths already traveled and consumed and for having attempted to solve false problems. Please refer here, ex multis, to the survey "What does COVID-19 mean for education personnel in Europe?" commissioned by the European Trade Union Committee for Education, 2020: <https://www.csee-etuce.org/en/policy-issues/covid-19/3631-general-information>.

of the traditional lesson into a distance lesson does not involve and does not ask *prima facie* and necessarily high resolutions understood as special scenographic techniques at the price of a Lilliputian reduction of the actors involved.

The remote lesson is not a reduced or enlarged, immeasurable lesson, a lesson resulting from a consistent and redundant make-up as if it had the echo (proper of a bronze that resounds or a cymbal that tinkles, to use a Pauline expression), at the center of which the teacher should represent the demiurge of the beginning of time who, in a sidereal silence, forges the brute and rebellious matter for the first time.

If we really want to compare the teacher grappling with digital teaching to a different or additional professional figure, we would say, albeit with the necessary distinctions, that the teacher is an architect of the teaching construction but in the manner of Phidias, aware that the stability of a structure does not lie in the beauty of the capitals, but in the bearing columns and in the solid foundations, or to a screenwriter, an expert in dialogues, and capable of transferring and making intelligible, for example, the dialogue of a text in a dialogue of a hyper- text, just as a screenwriter translates the dialogues of a novel into dialogues of a film. Distance learning, therefore, is a very serious hermeneutic question: a digital environment - and even more so a digital learning environment - reproduces and extends itself in an *autopoietic* dynamic that realizes and creates a new relationality to the point of leading us to think that the network is not a physical place but a new relational dynamic. Precisely because of its intrinsically relational essence, the digital communication network could (the conditional is a must) become a privileged and new learning and teaching environment when it creates and establishes a new otherness and where, for example, the text becomes hypertext unveiling, by successive approximations, a plot held together by links whose fruition is called navigation, a sort of *multilinear*, branched, *multisequential*, interactive, and above all polyphonic going back and forth.

In the first practical and large-scale e-learning experiments that accompanied this paradigm shift in teaching, a certain *dialogic monolingualism* seems to have overwhelmingly prevailed, which is above all semiotic and semantic monologism, not only and not so much linguistic as ontological and structural and tenaciously oriented towards an identity-based and strongly conservative monos: it has lived and experienced (almost suffered) the educational *plurilingualism/plurilogism* due to digital relationality as a sort of punishment and fall from an original heavenly condition as frontal didactics is still understood, or as a dangerous detour from the paths already beaten and already crossed by the tradition and history of teaching and its usual applications which, like roads with a single lane and a single direction of travel, which provide for linearity, consequentality not so much expository as theoretical. This linearity is at the antipodes to the chaotic capacity described by Poincaré (1997) in the theory of a systemic chaos which leads creative thought precisely to the connection of even contrasting and contradictory elements, because only in this way one can proceed in the knowledge of new discoveries and intuitions. The rigidly frontal posture of traditional teaching, and we would also say of *monolithically* traditionalist teaching with the cumbersome presence of the fourth wall, seems to have moved into digital dynamics, thus betraying the leathery insistence in a posture unsuitable for hermeneutic circularity: in remote teaching of the first coinage, inevitably imperfect and perfectible, a return to the ancient static nature of the teacher mediated simply by the screen and the video, but unchanged in its theoretical immovability, has emerged.

In other words, we have forgotten that a digital educational offer is not a mask that amplifies the voice, as in the ancient Greek theatres, but a possibility of an advanced and ever-renewing educational offer. If in traditional teaching the teacher, as priest of an unrepeatable event, resounds only once and his lesson is an unrepeatable epiphany in linear and progressive space-time. In distance learning, however, the teacher ceases to be a sort of Toscanini which on principle does not give any encores: in distance learning the lesson event can, thanks to the digital medium, bounce over and over again in the curved space-time of the digital dimension.

This means that despite being a single event in its essence and structure, it is capable of capitalizing on all the freedom of the teacher and all its intentionality and originality, but it is also capable of

creating a situation/event that can be repeated at will. This exempts and relieves from all that arduous effort that often culminates with the well-known phraseology of didactic language, when the resigned teacher rolls his eyes rhetorically asking his impassive audience: “How many times do I have to repeat it?” or “I’ve said this thing a hundred times and even the walls know it”.

So, simplifying down to the minimum terms, one would say this: giving as understood that “saying one thing a hundred times in the same way” is impossible (Eco, 2003), what happens in traditional teaching, where a lesson is a unique event in the space and time, is that the teacher offers the lesson and the class receives the lesson and plays it back, exactly like in a tennis match we would say. If this is the structure, in it the repetition of the single segment, or rather the repetition of the *quid didacticum*, is postponed solely as an exercise, as a task, as an assignment to the students' responsibility (Metzger, 1971): they are called to repeat, or to remember, in a very precise “logic of the mechanical system” (Maggi, 1991: 15-16) the lesson listened to only once.

Instead, in distance learning, the paradigm is turned upside down: the lesson is unique but can be repeated several times, even more than the hundred times mentioned above.

Now, the (remote) lesson-event is not just a mere bouncing, physical and metaphysical, from one server to another: it is a pedagogical event in all its nuances if inserted in an ontological framework capable of not opposing any resistance to plurality of languages and systems. And this plurality of systems does not only belong to the world of linguistic-interpersonal relationships, but also extends to the pedagogical-didactic dynamics and to learning environments of various configurations where, although perhaps in a less rooted way, one can still perceive an orientation towards what appears to be a dogma: the unidirectionality of a single training channel, projected towards a single mechanism of learning.

In short, as long as an intrinsic difficulty in adapting all the interlocutors of the didactic scene to the plurality of semantically different learning paths persists in e-learning, the ability to move, to ferry oneself from a didactic posture to another, from the didactic posture of the frontal lesson to the digital one, the latter will continue to be difficult and clumsy, a blurry and botched copy, or faked, of the authentic original, like a pirated version of a software. And the filter of separation will continue to remain, even more subtle because it does not separate bodies as in the theater, but separates and divides the relational dialogue.

5. Translate the lesson as a play

The digital lesson can be understood as the translation from one linguistic or narrative system to another or as the translation of a novel into a film (think of the translation of the novel *The Leopard* by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa into the film of the same name by Luchino Visconti) or of a story in a theatrical text (think of the translation of Chekhov's stories on stage) and therefore imposes a reversal of roles or a change of register or a new mental grammar capable of tearing the veil of stereotypy. The digital lesson is not a copy of the frontal lesson but has its own identity (and dignity) just as Jean-Luc Nancy (2010) said of the theater which «in itself, allows you to experience new identities and if identity is also the shape that the world gives us, the theater allows us to take off one skin and put on another». Without exaggerating, it could be said that distance learning would allow teachers and students to experience a new reality of identity thanks to the integrated use of the media. This condition is not that recent: the philosopher Plato had the same doubts that many teachers are probably experiencing today regarding the appropriate and possible use of new communication techniques when he shifted and converted from the oral system to the written method, adapting to writing despite the aversion to it, also nourished by the master Socrates. Plato created with his translation from orality to dialogue an unprecedented and very personal way of transmitting philosophy that was able to preserve and keep intact the dynamism of the spoken word. In fact, the form of dialogue has added to the flexibility and extemporaneous nature of oral transmission, the strength and power of written expression in a *unicum* that has spanned the centuries establishing itself as one

of the highest expressions of philosophical writing, as well as a one of the most effective forms of dissemination of knowledge thanks to its three-dimensional nature which can simultaneously accommodate and seat around the same (virtual, we dare say) table both the author and the interlocutors of the dialogue and last, but not least, the reader who, in the guise of a mere reader or interpreter, feels in every line, and always remains aware, that he has been chosen, hosted and welcomed to be part of this highly virtuous hermeneutical circle.

Even online teaching is a rethinking of style and therefore has the task of translating the discourse into a formula that knows how to go beyond and deconstruct face-to-face teaching (which often hides behind it the separation between teachers and students): if it does not inaugurate a new posture and if it is reduced to a mere video that reproduces the face of the teacher who continues to answer questions never asked, it obtains the same effect as that director who, determined to translate a novel into a film or a theater play, did so by using a long, interminable sequence of images together with a barely modulated background voice reading the text.

Online teaching means manipulating the integrated use of different communication codes (from audio to video, to the concept maps, to images, to bibliographic references, all blended together) and this requires a radical revision and re-reading of the language and code used in written texts or in the frontal lesson towards cross-media and trans-media, or rather towards the possibility of connecting the means of communication with each other and towards that narrative form which, crossing different types of media, it helps to improve, perfect and integrate the interlocutor's experience with new informational inputs. Not only that: online teaching transforms the educational gesture (Ferrari, Carlomagno, Di Tore, P. A., Di Tore, S., Rivoltella, 2013).

The digital lesson is a work of translation, from text to hypertext, from lectures to algorithmic three-dimensionality: we can do a thought experiment to grasp the potential of a multi-code translation, as digital teaching requires today and think of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Only the written texts of them remain today, but if we were able to re-propose their fruition with music, with dances, perhaps even with the mime that accompanied the oral and collective vision at the time of the ancient Greek *aedo* (when probably also the public was emotionally and plastically involved in the narration, modifying and altering it), the same works today would be understood and experienced in a completely different way, and different every time. In the encounter with the different mediums and with the different linguistic codes, each one carrying information, the user cooperates in the good rendering of the story and in the final understanding of the narration, just as the audience who listened to the bard interacted with it.

In the digital lesson then, which brings together several mediums, each student can play an active role and, through a real immersion in didactic storytelling, can be called upon to reconstruct the overall meaning by interacting with the various media, and can be called even to fill the narrative or cognitive gaps deliberately left uncharted by the teacher like forest paths waiting to be mowed in order to be crossed. In short, the fourth wall can really be eliminated, a new proximity created, an equally new proxemics that decreases the distance can be deconstructed (in spite of the distance teaching term) because the teaching staff and the learners can both be directors at the same time.

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