



Imagine we have a text in our hands. We find it in a blog or newspaper, in a book or a magazine and we start reading it so we become readers.

Before we open a horizon of ideas, we want to thank someone that one day had the conviction to express feelings or doubts, discoveries or hypotheses, concerns or hopes. The text is now in our hands and we read it for a specific situation, supported by our previous experiences and studies.

Without knowing the author of the text, his words are penetrating my soul. What effect will they have? Will they lead me to the truth? Will my doubts increase? Will they teach me to love? Will hate in my heart promote people near or far away?

In the Greek world, a text attributed to the sophist Gorgias explained the overwhelming force of the word. Those who listen to a speech or those who read a text are often subjugated by ideas formulated by someone else.

What happens if one text leads me to injustice, hatred, lying, evil? Gorgias would respond that the fault is fundamentally the one who divulged the ideas that now dominate me. My soul begins to be his victim: he succumbs trapped by his words.

But the question arises: am I a simple vassal of what I have read or hear? Are my convictions good enough to show I can “resist” or judge the message before my eyes?

Gorgias himself recognized that a listener who had full knowledge of the past, the present, and the future would never be dragged by false words. That full knowledge, however, it’s difficult but it’s not impossible, because we are almost semi-unarmed in the face of words that continually come before the doors of our souls.

Reading is an adventure. Choosing a good book with clear ideas, with good truths, with beautiful (we hope) style, allows us to move towards goals that we all crave. So, before we start reading, it's worth stopping for a moment and asking: Is this text going to help me on the path of my human existence?