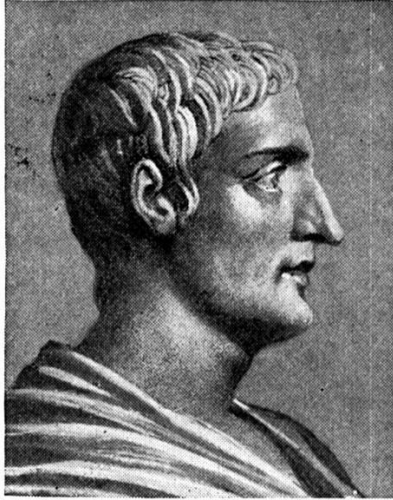


# Institutes of Oratory

by Quintilian



*Marcus Fabius Quintilian (ca. 35-96 CE) was born in the Roman province of Calagurris in Spain, probably to a well-to-do Spanish family that had obtained citizenship in the Empire. He was educated both in Roman schools in Spain and in Rome itself, where he studied rhetoric with the famous forensic orator and consul, Domitus Afer. Quintilian's background and training thus resemble Cicero's; however, he was a provincial, one of many who flocked to Rome in imperial times and enriched its culture. When Afer died, around 59 CE, Quintilian returned to Spain to practice law and to teach rhetoric. He returned to Rome in 68 in the entourage of Galba, who was briefly emperor. There followed a year of great political upheaval in which two other men seized the throne before Vespasian established his reign. Somehow Quintilian avoided being swept away in Galba's downfall, and he began teaching rhetoric, for which he soon became renowned. Vespasian gave him the first imperial endowed chair in rhetoric in 71.*

## Book II, Chapter XV

1. FIRST of all, then, we have to consider what rhetoric is. It is, indeed, defined in various ways, but its definition gives rise chiefly to two considerations, for the dispute is, in general, either concerning the quality of the thing itself or concerning the comprehension of the terms in which it is defined. The first and chief difference of opinion on the subject is that some think it possible even for bad men to have the name of orators, while others (to whose opinion I attach myself) maintain that the name and the art of which we are speaking can be conceded only to good men.

2. Of those who separate the talent of speaking from the greater and more desirable praise of a good life, some have called rhetoric merely a power; some a science but not a virtue; some a habit, some an art, but having nothing in common with science and virtue; some even an abuse of art, that is, a **κακοτεχνία** (*kakotechnia*). 3. All these have generally supposed that the business

of oratory lies either in persuading or in speaking in a manner adapted to persuade, for such art may be attained by one who is far from being a good man. The most common definition therefore is that oratory is the power of persuading. What I call a power, some call a faculty and others a talent, but that this discrepancy may be attended with no ambiguity, I mean by "power" **δύναμις** (*dynamis*). 4. This opinion had its origin from Isocrates, if the treatise on the art which is in circulation under his name is really his. That rhetorician, though he had none of the feelings of those who defame the business of the orator, gives too rash a definition of the art when he says, "That rhetoric is the "worker of persuasion," **πειθοῦς δημιουργός** (*peithous dēmiourgos*), for I shall not allow myself to use the peculiar term that Ennius applies to Marcus Cethegus, *suadae medulla*, "marrow of persuasion." 5. In Plato too, Gorgias, in the dialogue inscribed with his name, says almost the same thing, but Plato wishes it to be received as the opinion of Gorgias, not as his own. Cicero, in several passages of his writings, has said that the duty of an orator is to speak in a way adapted to persuade. 6. In his books on rhetoric also, but with which, doubtless, he was not satisfied, he makes the end of eloquence to be persuasion.

But money, likewise, has the power of persuasion, as do interest, and the authority and dignity of a speaker, and even his very look, unaccompanied by language, when either the remembrance of the services of any individual, or a pitiable appearance, or beauty of person, draws forth an opinion. 7. Thus when Antonius, in his defense of Manius Aquilius, exhibited on his breast, by tearing his client's robe, the scars of the wounds he had received for his country, he did not trust to the power of his eloquence, but applied force, as it were, to the eyes of the Roman people, who, it was thought, were chiefly induced by the sight to acquit the accused. 8. That Servius Galba escaped merely through the pity which he excited, when he not only produced his own little children before the assembly, but carried round in his hands the son of Sulpicius Gallus, is testified, not only by the records of others, but by the speech of Cato. 9. Phryne too, people think, was freed from peril, not by the pleading of Hyperides, though it was admirable, but by the exposure of her figure, which, otherwise most striking, he had uncovered by opening her robe. If, then, all such things persuade, the definition of which we have spoken is not satisfactory.

10. Those, accordingly, have appeared to themselves more exact, who, though they have the same general opinion as to rhetoric, have pronounced it to be the power of persuading by speaking. This definition Gorgias gives, in the dialogue which we have just mentioned, being forced to do so, as it were, by Socrates. Theodectes, if the treatise on rhetoric which is inscribed with his name is his (or it may rather, perhaps, as has been supposed, be the work of Aristotle), does not dissent from Gorgias, for it is asserted in that book that the object of oratory is to lead men by speaking to that which the speaker wishes. 11. But not even this definition is sufficiently comprehensive, for not only the orator, but others, such as harlots, flatterers, and seducers, persuade or lead to that which they wish, by speaking. But the orator, on the contrary, does not always persuade, so that sometimes this is not his peculiar object; sometimes it is an object common to him with others who are very different from orators. 12. Yet Apollodorus varies but little from this definition, as he says that the first and supreme object of judicial pleading is to persuade the judge and to lead him to whatever opinion the speaker may wish, for he thus subjects the orator to the power of fortune, so that if he does not succeed in persuading, he cannot retain the name of an orator. 13. Some, on the other hand, detach themselves from all considerations as to the event, as Aristotle, who says that oratory is the power of finding out

whatever can persuade in speaking. But this definition has not only the fault of which we have just spoken, but the additional one of comprehending nothing but invention, which without elocution cannot constitute oratory. 14. To Hermagoras, who says that the object of oratory is to speak persuasively, and to others who express themselves to the same purpose, though not in the same words, but tell us that the object of oratory is to say all that ought to be said in order to persuade, a sufficient answer was given when we showed that to persuade is not the business of the orator only.

15. Various other opinions have been added to these, for some have thought that oratory may be employed about all subjects, others only about political affairs, but which of these notions is nearer to truth, I shall inquire in that part of my work which will be devoted to the question. 16. Aristotle seems to have put everything in the power of oratory when he says that it is the power of saying on every subject whatever can be found to persuade; and such is the case with Patrocles, who indeed does not add on every subject, but as he makes no exception, shows that his idea is the same, for he calls oratory the power of finding whatever is persuasive in speaking, both which definitions embrace invention alone. Theodorus, in order to avoid this defect, decides oratory to be the power of discovering and expressing, with elegance, whatever is credible on any subject whatever. 17. But while one who is not an orator may find out what is credible as well as what is persuasive, he, by adding on any subject whatever, grants more than the preceding makers of definitions and allows the title of a most honorable art to those who may persuade even to crime. 18. Gorgias, in Plato, calls himself a master of persuasion in courts of justice and other assemblies, and says that he treats both of what is just and what is unjust; and Socrates allows him the art of persuading, but not of teaching.

19. Those who have not granted all subjects to the orator have made distinctions in their definitions, as they were necessitated, with more anxiety and verbosity. One of these is Ariston, a disciple of Critolaus the Peripatetic, whose definition of oratory is that it is the science of discovering and expressing what ought to be said on political affairs, in language adapted to persuade the people. 20. Because he is a Peripatetic, he considers oratory a science, not a virtue, like the Stoics, but in adding "adapted to persuade the people," he throws dishonor on the art of oratory, as if he thought it unsuited to persuade the learned. But of all who think that the orator is to discourse only on political questions, it may be said, once for all, that many duties of the orator are set aside by them, for instance, all laudatory speaking, which is the third part of oratory. 21. Theodorus of Gadara (to proceed with those who have thought oratory an art, not a virtue) defines more cautiously, for he says (let me borrow the words of those who have translated his phraseology from the Greek) that oratory is an art that discovers, judges, and enunciates with suitable eloquence, according to the measure of that which may be found adapted to persuading, in any subject connected with political affairs. 22. Cornelius Celsus, in like manner, says that the object of oratory is to speak persuasively on doubtful and political matters. To these definitions there are some, not very dissimilar, given by others, such as this: "Oratory is the power of judging and discoursing on such civil questions as are submitted to it, with a certain persuasiveness, a certain action of the body, and a certain mode of delivering what it expresses." 23. There are a thousand other definitions, but either similar or composed of similar elements, which we shall notice when we come to treat upon the subjects of oratory.

Some have thought it neither a power, nor a science, nor an art; Critolaus calls it the practice of speaking (for such is the meaning of the word **τριβή** (*tribē*)), Athenaeus, the art of deceiving. 24. But most writers, satisfied with reading a few passages from Plato's *Gorgias*, unskilfully extracted by their predecessors (for they neither consult the whole of that dialogue, nor any of the other writings of Plato), have fallen into a very grave error, supposing that that philosopher entertained such an opinion as to think that oratory was not an art, but a certain skilfulness in flattering and pleasing. 25. As he says in another place, the simulation of one part of polity, and the fourth sort of flattery, for he assigns two parts of polity to the body, medicine, and, as they interpret it, exercise, and two to the mind, law and justice, and then calls the art of cooks the flattery or simulation of medicine, and the art of dealers in slaves the simulation of the effects of exercise, as they produce a false complection by paint and the appearance of strength by unsolid fat; the simulation of legal science he calls sophistry and that of justice rhetoric. 26. All this is indeed expressed in that dialogue and uttered by Socrates, under whose person Plato seems to intimate what he thinks, but some of his dialogues were composed merely to refute those who argued on the other side and are called **ἐλεγκτικοί** "elenctic"; others were written to teach and are called **δογματικοί** "dogmatic". 27. But Socrates, or Plato, thought that sort of oratory which was then practised to be of a dogmatic character, for he speaks of it as being "according to the manner in which you manage public affairs," and understands oratory of a sincere and honorable nature.

The dispute with Gorgias is accordingly thus terminated: "It is therefore necessary that the orator be a just man and that the just man should wish to do just things." 28. When this has been said, Gorgias is silent, but Polus resumes the subject, who, from the ardor of youth, is somewhat inconsiderate, and in reply to whom the remarks on simulation and flattery are made. Callicles, who is even more vehement, speaks next, but is reduced to the conclusion that "he who would be a true orator must be a just man and must know what is just." It is therefore evident that oratory was not considered by Plato an evil, but that he thought true oratory could not be attained by any but a just and good man. 29. In the *Phaedrus* he sets forth still more clearly that the art cannot be fully acquired without a knowledge of justice, an opinion to which I also assent. Would Plato, if he had held any other sentiments, have written the *Defense of Socrates*, and the eulogy of those who fell in defense of their country, compositions which are certainly work for the orator? 30. But he has even inveighed against that class of men who used their abilities in speaking for bad ends. Socrates also thought the speech which Lysias had written for him when accused improper for him to use, though it was a general practice at that time to compose for parties, appearing before the judges, speeches which they themselves might deliver; and thus an elusion of the law by which one man was not allowed to speak for another was effected. 31. By Plato, also, those who separated oratory from justice and preferred what is probable to what is true, were thought no proper teachers of the art, for so he signifies, too, in his *Phaedrus*. 32. Cornelius Celsus, moreover, may be thought to have been of the same opinion with those to whom I have just referred, for his words are *the orator aims only at the semblance of truth*; and he adds, a little after, *not purity of conscience, but the victory of his client, is the reward of the pleader*. Were such assertions true, it would become only the worst of men to give such pernicious weapons to the most mischievous of characters and to aid dishonesty with precepts, but let those who hold this opinion consider what ground they have for it.

33. Let me, for my part, as I have undertaken to form a perfect orator whom I would have, above all, to be a good man, return to those who have better thoughts of the art. Some have pronounced oratory to be indetical with civil polity. Cicero calls it a part of civil polity, and a knowledge of civil polity, he thinks, is nothing less than wisdom itself. Some have made it a part of philosophy, among whom is Isocrates. 34. With this character of it, the definition that oratory is the science of speaking well agrees excellently, for it embraces all the virtues of oratory at once and includes also the character of the true orator, as he cannot speak well unless he be a good man. 35. To the same purpose is the definition of Chrysippus derived from Cleanthes, the science of speaking properly. There are more definitions in the same philosopher, but they relate rather to other questions. A definition framed in these terms, to persuade to what is necessary, would convey the same notion except that it makes the art depend on the result. 36. Areus defines oratory well, saying that it is to speak according to the excellence of speech. Those also exclude bad men from oratory who consider it as the knowledge of civil duties, since they deem such knowledge virtue, but they confine it within too narrow bounds and to political questions. Albutius, no obscure professor or author, allows that it is the art of speaking well, but errs in giving it limitations, adding on political questions and with probability, of both which restrictions I have already disposed; those, too, are men of good intention who consider it the business of oratory to think and speak rightly.

37. These are almost all the most celebrated definitions and those about which there is the most controversy. To discuss all would neither be much to the purpose nor would be in my power, since a foolish desire, as I think, has prevailed among the writers of treatises on rhetoric to define nothing in the same terms that another had already used, a vain-glorious practice which shall be far from me. 38. For I shall say not what I shall invent, but what I shall approve, as, for instance, that oratory is the art of speaking well, since when the best definition is found, he who seeks for another must seek for a worse.

This being admitted, it is evident at the same time what object, what highest and ultimate end, oratory has, that object or end which is called *τέλος* (*telos*) and to which every art tends, for if oratory be the art of speaking well, its object and ultimate end must be to speak well.