

Latin Text, DĒ BELLŌ GALLICŌ 6.20.8–10, p. 175

Magistrātūs quae vīsa sunt occultant quaeque esse ex ūsū
iudicāverunt multitudinī prōdunt. *Dē rē publicā* nisi per
10 concilium loquī nōn concēditur.

Literal Translation Molinarius

The magistrates hide what things have seemed good [to hide] and what things they have judged to be of use they publish to the multitude. Concerning the state unless by assembly [i.e., in an official gathering] it is not permitted to speak.

Literal Translation McDevitte

The magistrates conceal those things which require to be kept unknown; and they disclose to the people whatever they determine to be expedient. It is not lawful to speak of the commonwealth, except in council.

Discussion Questions

1. The philosopher Plato famously describes his ideal of a world where philosopher kings would rule, and, because they were wise, they would tell the people only what they needed to know, and, if these philosopher kings deemed it useful, they would also lie to the people for the greater good of society. In your view, is it good for a society when its leaders conceal some disturbing truths from the people? Why or why not?
2. The US Constitution guarantees the right to assemble, that is, the right of citizens to gather in groups, to discuss political issues of concern to them. What is the danger to a government if citizens are allowed to assemble without political leaders to control the shape or direction of the discussion? Why did the Gauls prohibit this kind of discussion?
3. What is your general assessment of Gallic society, politics, and religion? How do you think Caesar's readers would have compared their society on these points to Gallic practices?
4. After reading Caesar's descriptions of the Gauls, how do you think his Roman readers would have felt about Caesar's efforts to suppress their rebellion against Roman rule?