

Prof. Vicente Dobroruka

dobroruka@pej-unb.org

Universidade de Brasília

IHD - Dpto. de História

Brasília -DF-

70910-900

Fonte: Tácito, *Diálogo sobre oradores*

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Edição: *Complete Works of Tacitus*. Tacitus. New York: Random House, 1942 (trad. A.J. Church, W.J. Brodribb e S. Bryant).

Seções: 41

[41] And so now the forum, which is all that our speakers have left them of antiquity, is an evidence of a state not thoroughly reformed or as orderly as we could wish. Who but the guilty or unfortunate apply to us? What town puts itself under our protection but one harassed by its neighbours or by strife at home? When we plead for a province is it not one that has been plundered and ill-treated? Surely it would be better not to complain than to have to seek redress. Could a community be found in which no one did wrong, an orator would be as superfluous among its innocent people as a physician among the healthy. As the healing art is of very little use and makes very little progress in nations which enjoy particularly robust constitutions and vigorous frames, so the orator gets an inferior and less splendid renown where a sound morality and willing obedience to authority prevail. What need there of long speeches in the senate, when the best men are soon of one mind, or of endless harangues to the people, when political questions are decided not by an ignorant multitude, but by one man of pre-eminent wisdom? What need of voluntary prosecutions, when crimes are so rare and slight, or of defences full of spiteful insinuation and exceeding proper bounds, when the clemency of the judge offers itself to the accused in his peril? Be assured, my most excellent, and, as far as the age requires, most eloquent friends, that had you been born in the past, and the men we admire in our own day, had some god in fact suddenly changed your lives and your age, the highest fame and glory of eloquence would have been yours, and they too would not have lacked moderation and self-control. As it is, seeing that no one can at the same time enjoy great renown and great tranquillity, let everybody make the best of the blessings of his own age without disparaging other periods. Maternus had now finished. There were, replied Messala, some points I should controvert, some on which I should like to hear more, if the day were not almost spent. It shall be, said Maternus, as you wish, on a future occasion, and anything you have thought obscure in my argument, we will again discuss. Then he rose and embraced Aper. I mean, he said, to accuse you before the poets, and so will Messala before the antiquarians. And I, rejoined Aper, will



accuse you before the rhetoricians and professors. They laughed good-humouredly, and we parted..