On the Republic (De Republica), Books 1 and 3

By Cicero


**Bold numbers in brackets indicate the standard divisions in Cicero’s texts in which are found in whole or part the sections reproduced here. Bracketed words or phrases usually represent Professor Fott’s efforts to supply a missing or unclear part of the text. Sometimes bracketed material represents my effort to clarify a term or reference, and I do so at times with the benefit of material Professor Fott presents in the notes accompanying his translation. –Walter Nicgorski**

---

**Book 1**

*[In the early pages of this dialogue, there is a discussion of the relative importance of different kinds of inquiry including that of speculation on the nature of the heavens and the universe as a whole. Scipio, a statesman on holiday, is found in the passage below (just after a missing portion of the dialogue) reflecting on a kind of high utility or perspective that might result from such inquiry.]*

*[26] Furthermore, what should someone who has examined these kingdoms of the gods consider splendid in human affairs? Or what is long lasting to someone who knows what is eternal? Or what is glorious to someone who has seen how small the earth is—first the whole of it, then the part of it that human beings inhabit—and how tiny is the part of it in which we, completely unknown to many nations, are fixed? Nevertheless we hope that our name will fly around and roam very far. [27] The man who is not inclined to consider or call “goods” our fields, buildings, cattle, and enormous amounts of silver and gold, because the enjoyment of those things seems trifling to him, their use short, their mastery uncertain, and often even the worst men seem to possess an enormous amount of them—how fortunate he must be considered. He alone may truly claim all things as his own by right not of the Quirites [of his citizenship status] but of the wise, not by a civil obligation but by the common law of nature, which forbids that anything belong to anyone except to him who knows how to handle and use it. Such a man thinks that our positions of command and consulships are necessary things, not things to be desired—that they should be endured for the sake of performing a service, not desired for the sake of rewards or glory. Such a man, finally, can declare about himself, as Cato writes that my grandfather Africanus used to say, that he was never doing more than when he was doing nothing, that he was never less alone than when he was alone.]*

---

**Book III**

*[Philus is speaking as he makes a classic challenge to the notion that justice is something eternal and...*
universal, rooted in the nature of things.]

[18] . . . [if nature] had consecrated rights for us, all men [would use] the same, and the same men would not use [now] some rights, [then] other rights. But I ask, if it is for a just man and a good man to obey laws, which ones? Whichever ones may exist? But virtue does not accept inconsistency, nor does nature allow variation. The laws are asser...