

## Readings from Hobbes, Lucretius, and Genesis

In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain, and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

—Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, “Part I, Chapter 10. Of the Natural Condition of Mankind as Concerning Their Felicity and Misery.”

### Mother Nature

First gave us demonstrations of the way  
Sowing might operate; the acorns fell  
Under the oaks, bushes (or birds) dropped berries  
Whose seeds in time became small shoots, a swarm  
New risen, and men learned the stranger craft  
Of grafting, or of planting slips in the earth,  
Tried cultivation of their little plots,  
Found methods of improving wilder growth  
By patience and by gentleness, the way  
Trainers succeed in taming other stock.  
They made the woods climb higher up the mountains  
Yielding the lowlands to be tilled and tended—  
With meadow, pool, and stream, with oats and wheat  
On the low plains—and higher on the hills  
Vineyards to make men glad, and olive trees  
Whose gray-green color marked the boundary  
Up hill, down dale, so you could see all things  
Charming, and all things different, all adorned—  
Sweet orchards, lovely hedgerows.

—Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 5.1361-1378 (Rolfe Humphries, tr.)

The man had experience of his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, as she said, “I have added a life with the help of Yahweh.” Next she bore his brother Abel. Abel became a keeper of flocks, and Cain became a tiller of the soil. In the course of time, Cain brought an offering to Yahweh of fruit of the soil. For his part, Abel brought the finest of the firstlings of his flock. Yahweh showed regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he showed no regard. Cain resented this greatly and his countenance fell. Yahweh said to Cain, “Why are you resentful, and why has your countenance fallen? Surely, if you act right, it should mean exaltation. But if you do not, sin is the demon at the door, whose urge is toward you; yet you can be his master.”

Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let us go outside.” And when they were outside, Cain set upon his brother Abel and killed him. Then Yahweh asked Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” He replied, “I don’t know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” And he said, “What have you done! Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the soil Hence you are banned from

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the soil which forced open its mouth to take your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the soil, it shall not again give up its strength to you. A restless wanderer shall you be on the earth!"

—E.A. Speiser (tr.), *The Anchor Bible: Genesis* 4:1-12