In this book Professor Kronenberg shows that Xenophon’s *Oeconomica*, Varro’s *De Re Rustica*, and Virgil’s *Georgics* are not simply works on farming but belong to a tradition of philosophical satire which uses allegory and irony to question the meaning of morality and the right way to live. These works metaphorically connect farming and its related arts to political life; but instead of presenting farming in its traditional guise as a positive symbol, they use it to model the materialistic foundations and deficiencies of conventional morality and politics. In turn, they juxtapose a contemplative model of life that is superior to the active life in its access to knowledge and lack of hypocrisy. Although these three texts are not usually treated together, and each section can be taken as a stand-alone analysis, this book convincingly connects them with an original and provocative interpretation of their allegorical use of farming. It also fills an important gap in our understanding of the literary influences on the *Georgics* by showing that it is shaped not just by its poetic predecessors but by philosophical dialogue.

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But you think that the shepherd, in his capacity as shepherd, fattens the flock not with a view to what is best for the flock but, as if he were some guest about to feast, with a view to good cheer, or, in turn, with a view to selling them, as if he were a money-maker, not a shepherd. But surely the concern of the shepherding art is nothing other than to provide what is best for its charge.

Socrates to Thrasymachus, Plato’s Republic 345c–d

By the Gods, you simply never cease talking about cobblers, clothes-cleaners, cooks, and doctors, as if our discussion were about them.

Callicles to Socrates, Plato’s Gorgias 491a
Contents

Acknowledgments ix
Abbreviations and editions x

Introduction 1
Menippean satire, ancient and modern 3
Irony in Xenophon, Varro, and Virgil 7
Allegory in Xenophon, Varro, and Virgil 20
Morality and ethics 23
Genre and influence 32

Part I Xenophon’s Oeconomicus

1 Socrates and Critobulus (Oec. 1–6) 39
   Persian farming 42
   Praise of farming 46

2 A philosopher and a gentleman (Oec. 7–21) 54
   Ischomachus’ beehive 56
   The art of farming 62
   Xenophon’s Republic? 66

Part II Varro’s De Re Rustica

3 The art of farming 76
   Scrofa 77
   Ratio vs. consuetudo 81
   Varro: Satirist or pedant? 85
   Cicero and Varro 88
   The triumph of nature 90
   Books 2 and 3 91
## Contents

### PART III  VIRGIL’S **GEORGICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Virgil’s satire on farming</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The failure of knowledge</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The amorality of farming</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The active life</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Farmers and poets</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book 1: <em>religio</em></td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book 2: <em>ratio</em></td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book 3: <em>gloria</em></td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book 4: <em>genus immortale</em></td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Epilogue**

**Bibliography**

**Index of passages cited**

**General index**
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Abbreviations and editions

Abbreviations to ancient authors and works are based on those used in the LSJ and OLD. Abbreviations to classical journals are based on those used in the L’Année Philologique, with the customary alterations for English usage. In addition, the following abbreviations are used:


The editions used for the major primary texts discussed are as follows. Translations are my own.


Note: The first numbers for the Mandeville references indicate volume and page number of Kaye’s edition, and the number in brackets is Kaye’s reference to the original pagination of Mandeville’s text.
Abbreviations and editions

