LINES OF ENQUIRY
Studies in Latin Poetry
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Although the book which follows cannot be said to make a formal whole, it is not just a collection of miscellaneous essays. Each chapter starts intentionally from a different position and employs a different method; yet they all converge on the subject of Latin poetry. And so, taken together, they illustrate, however imperfectly, the idea that in the study of literature no single point of view (whether philological, religious, historical, or economic) has any special authority, and that the value of a given technique depends entirely on its fruitfulness.

Apart from this impure, empirical, theory, there is another common factor. While these papers no doubt contain their share of prejudice and error, they do attempt in their different ways to expound some kind of thesis. They work through argument and are therefore open to refutation. And they assume that the old tag de gustibus non disputandum is something which a critic utters only when he wishes to break off an argument without coming to blows. In case this sounds too attractively pugnacious I should add that, when other writers are referred to, it means that I value their work, have learned much from it, and wish to put forward a different view only on the particular point at issue. Usually this is not a matter of direct confrontation but of trying to modify or supplement what those scholars have said. This has particular reference to Professors Rogers and Thibault (chapter 1), Austin and Williams (chapter 2), Highet and Anderson (chapter 4), Otis and Skutsch (chapter 5), and Trilling and Delany (chapter 6).

The oldest of the papers (1) is based on seminars given at Yale in 1967, though I have tried to take account of more recent material in preparing this book. A secondary purpose in writing about Ovid and Augustus at that time was to maintain that if one didn’t appreciate the historical situation the satirical element would pass unnoticed, and one’s understanding of the Ars Amatoria as literature would be