



Once Out of Nature: Augustine on Time and the Body

Andrea Nightingale

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Once Out of Nature offers an original interpretation of Augustine's theory of time and embodiment. Andrea Nightingale draws on philosophy, sociology, literary theory, and social history to analyze Augustine's conception of temporality, eternity, and the human and transhuman condition.

In Nightingale's view, the notion of embodiment illuminates a set of problems much larger than the body itself: it captures the human experience of being an embodied soul dwelling on earth. In Augustine's writings, humans live both in and out of nature—exiled from Eden and punished by mortality, they are “resident aliens” on earth. While the human body is subject to earthly time, the human mind is governed by what Nightingale calls psychic time. For the human psyche always stretches away from the present moment—where the physical body persists—into memories and expectations. As Nightingale explains, while the body is present in the here and now, the psyche cannot experience self-presence. Thus, for Augustine, the human being dwells in two distinct time zones, in earthly time and in psychic time. The human self, then, is a moving target. Adam, Eve, and the resurrected saints, by contrast, live outside of time and nature: these transhumans dwell in an everlasting present.

Nightingale connects Augustine's views to contemporary debates about transhumans and suggests that Augustine's thought reflects our own ambivalent relationship with our bodies and the earth. *Once Out of Nature* offers a compelling invitation to ponder the boundaries of the human.

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