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*Quid ergo Hipponium et Floridensis?*¹
Or, Does Horner Succeed in Referring?
A Rejoinder

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I

A widely-quoted aphorism goes as follows: “In Florida it’s Augustine, but in heaven it’s Augustine.” As it stands, this aphorism borders on incoherence; it clearly needs disambiguation.

In order to understand the aphorism, we could consider *seriatum* the spectrum of meanings that the aphorism, taken as a locutionary act, is capable of generating. But life is short and we’re all busy; who has time for all that? So I shall take as my target the use of this aphorism by David Horner,² and so for ease of reference in what follows, and at the risk of some inaccuracy,³ I shall refer to it as Horner’s Maxim, or HM. Horner, an avowed Anglophile, utters the aphorism as follows (and here I beg the reader’s indulgence: to avoid introducing the unnecessary technical apparatus of linguistic phonological notation,⁴ I shall simply render the relevant parts of Horner’s utterance in a rather standard English phonetic representation, which I shall indicate by the use of corner quotes):

HM: “In Florida it’s ʀAW-gus-teenʀ, but in heaven it’s ʀuh-GUS-tinʀ.”

ABSTRACT: David Horner has recently offered a medieval argument for an Anglophilic pronunciation of the name of St. Augustine. I claim his disputatious account fails, both on an account of interlinguistic phonological equivalence, and on a Kripkean-style rigid-designator theory of reference. It turns out, surprisingly, that Floridians are closer to the truth about the correct pronunciation of the medieval saint’s name than are Englishmen.

1. With apologies to Tertullian.

2. David Horner, “Whether Augustine’s Name Should Be Pronounced AW-gus-teen or aw-GUS-tin?” *Philosophia Christi* 11 (2009): 239–41. Horner allows, in personal communication, that he was not the originator of the aphorism.

3. Nothing in what follows turns on the accuracy or inaccuracy of this characterization of the maxim as Horner’s.

4. See, however, footnote 8 below.

It is clear that Horner intends this utterance as the solution of the dispute about the pronunciation of the saint's name⁵—that is, his illocutionary act is directive, understood as either a command or a prescription.

But this easy solution has all the advantages of theft over honest toil. There are deep issues lurking in the neighborhood, issues too deep to be settled by appeal to Oxbridge conventionalism, no matter how widely accepted or deeply grounded in Anglophilic traditions. The issues are at once ontological and ethical, cutting to the quick of our nature as *Homo loquens*. Or so I say.

I shall begin with some definitions, and proceed to make some distinctions.

Let S and O range over natural languages. We may then define the following:

${}_S\Phi_O =_{\text{df}}$ the *closest phonological continuer* when moving from source language S to object language O .

${}_W P_L =_{\text{df}}$ the phonological identity of a word W in any language L .

Next, we define a phonemic function Λ as follows:

$\Lambda(S, O) =_{\text{df}}$ the phonological function operator that takes phonemes of S and renders them as phonemes of O .

I now introduce Principle P:

(P) Necessarily, when moving from a source language to an object language, one must in every case retain, to the greatest degree possible, the phonology of the source language in the object language

or, in symbols, where the domain of x is the phonemic stock of the source language, and ϕ is the phonetically correct vocalization of x ,

(P') $\Box(x)(xPs = \phi) \supset (\Lambda({}_S P, {}_S \Phi_O))$.

The modal operator is to be construed as broadly deontological. By my lights, this principle is about as close to being self-evident as anything in philosophy ever is; indeed, I believe I imbibed it with my mother's milk.

We may fairly ask, at this point, whether HM conforms to P (or P') or not. I claim that it does not.

Why not? Deploying the function Λ to the point at issue, we immediately are confronted with determining the value of ${}_W P_L$, where W = "Augustinus," and L = medieval Latin. According to the best current scholarship,⁶ the infant born of Berber descent on November 13, 354, in Thagaste, in the Roman Province of North Africa (present-day Souk Ahras, Algeria), was initially baptized (in the Kripkean sense) with the Roman (that is, Latin) name Aurelius Augustinus (to which later was affixed the eponymous surname Hipponensis, after the city in which he served as priest and bishop).

5. There being no dispute as to the pronunciation of the Florida city's name.

6. References are widely available for the interested reader.

While it is no easy matter to determine the vocalization of dead languages known to us only through inscriptional evidence, in this case we are much better off than with many ancient languages, for we have such probative evidence as rhyming poetry, and the vocalization of contemporary Italian, a direct linguistic descendent of medieval Latin.

Using, then, the tools available to careful scholarship, we can be quite confident that the name conferred on the baby boy on that November day in 354 would have been pronounced—*pace* Horner—as \lceil AW-gus-TEEN-US \rceil .⁷

From here it follows straightforwardly that the relevant closest phonological continuer, ${}_S\Phi_O$, where S = medieval Latin and O = contemporary English, is \lceil AW-gus-teen \rceil ,⁸ not \lceil uh-GUS-tin \rceil .

That is, by existential instantiation, we get

$$(1) \quad \Box(x)(xPs = \varphi) \supset (\Lambda({}_xP_{S,S}\Phi_O))$$

$$(2) \quad \Box(\text{“Augustinus”})({}_{\text{“Augustinus”}}P_{\text{medieval Latin}} = \lceil$$
AW-gus-teen-us $\rceil) \supset$

$$(\Lambda({}_{\text{“Augustinus”}}P_{\text{medieval Latin}} \lceil$$
AW-gus-teen $\rceil)).$

Again, recalling that the modality of the necessity operator is deontic, it follows that one would be blameworthy (in some hard-to-define sense of linguistic blame) if one were to follow HM.

II

We may arrive at this conclusion by a wholly independent route.

Let $B(x, n)$ be the event of the Kripkean initial baptism of an object x which fixes the reference of a name n , where the domain of x is actually existing objects, and n ranges over phonological possibilities.

Then, for our purposes, the set $\{B(\text{baby boy}, \text{“Augustinus”})\}$ is the set of baptisms in which baby boys were baptized with the name “Augustine.” There is, then, a member of that set which is the event constituted by the baptism of the particular baby boy christened in 354 with the Christian name of Augustinus, which, as we have seen, would have been, indexed to that time and place, vocalized as \lceil AW-gus-TEEN-US \rceil .

On a straightforward Kripkean causal-chain account of reference, linguistic reference is secured by the use of the proper name as a rigid designator that picks out the medieval saint in all possible worlds in which he exists.

Now, any adherent of HM—and indeed, if I understand him correctly, even Horner himself—should be taken to claim that the causal chain linking the use of the name \lceil uh-GUS-tin \rceil to the saint is nondefective, even given

7. I owe this point to David Hunt, who credits it to his wife, who is an authority on medieval Latin.

8. At the risk of pedantry, the International Phonetic Alphabet rendering of the medieval Latin pronunciation of the saint’s name would be \lceil ɔ:gʊstɪ:n.

the change in vocalization. That is, using the apparatus developed above, by embracing the nonapplicability of P', the role of ${}_s\Phi_o$ in securing reference is nil.

But this cannot be right. Why not? Because all sorts of unacceptable consequences follow. Take, for example, another medieval saint, Nicholas (Άγιος Νικόλαος), **born only some eighty-four years before Augustine. As** indicated by the Greek orthography, his name, with the acute accent falling on the short vowel of the penult, would have been pronounced ˈni-CO-las .⁹ If the nonapplicability of P' is accepted, then it follows that anyone today referring to "Saint Nick," regardless of the otiose modifiers "jolly" and "old," would in fact be picking out (rigidly designating) the Byzantine saint and not the denizen of the North Pole. But that is absurd, so the argument is a *reductio* of the abandonment of P' (or P).

It follows straightforwardly that those accepting HM are not, in fact, referring to the beloved bishop of Hippo, but *are referring to nothing*. And since nonexistent entities have no properties, there is no truth of the matter as to how the name should be pronounced. If nothing is picked out by using the name to refer, then nothing bears the name. Hence, in a disputation with an adherent of HM, I can only reply, "What we have here is a failure to communicate."

III

I conclude, therefore, that HM is to be rejected. It is surely time¹⁰ to agree on the proper pronunciation of Augustine's name. I hasten to allow, though, that Horner himself, given his commitments to eudaimonistic linguistic practice, is not far from the kingdom of virtuous vocalization.¹¹

9. See Eugene Van Ness Goetchius, *The Language of the New Testament* (New York: Scribners, 1965), §391(4)(b).

10. For an analysis of Augustine's views of time, see my *God and the Nature of Time* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 111–34.

11. I want to thank David Horner, whose loyal friendship more than makes up for his locutionary failure; colleagues who tried but failed to teach me what is important to argue about; and the many students over the years whose well-intended "corrections" of my pronunciation filled much-needed voids.