

Reply:

Thanks to Helmut Neuschäfer and Hans Helmcke, we now may have a more plausible model for the reflexive option of “in ihm” than the 1951 discussants could offer. It resembles Hegel’s use of “an ihm selbst” (see my essay “Wem leuchtet Mörikes ‘Lampe’?” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 110.4 [1991]) and may help to explain why the discussants trusted their preferred reading. Could it be that for Luther “ihm” stressed the reference to the subject of the sentence, whereas “sich” ambiguously permitted a reference to the object, “Leben”? The answer hardly matters, but it might be worth noting that he, too, did not commonly use the regular personal pronoun as a reflexive. In the same chapter: “Der Sohn kann nichts von sich selber tun” (5.19). The screw does not sit fast.

Our central question remains: why would Mörike have followed an obsolete and uncommon practice this one time, changing Goethe’s more modern phrasing and contradicting Mörike’s own related utterances? A reflexive use of “in ihm” is possible here, albeit unlikely, but the resulting message would be out of character—for the poet, not for the aestheticists of 1951 and thereafter.

Au fond the dispute is not about grammar, as Herbert Lindenberger notes (Forum, 106 [1991]: 314), and a few cries of protest will underscore that. In an almost political response, Berel Lang already warns of a “literary cost” (313). Further discussion may take into account the more detailed study referred to above, the basis of my comparatively brief original letter. There one might also find answers to several points raised by Forum contributors.

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Vargas Llosa and Popper

To the Editor:

It was very good to see Mario Vargas Llosa’s essay “Updating Karl Popper” in *PMLA* (105 [1990]: 1018–25), not only because its author is a writer of distinction but also—especially—because of its subject matter. The virtues of critical rationality and liberal tolerance, for which Popper has been a primary advocate during much of this century, now appear to need restating and justifying once more against their cultured despisers on the right and the left (and whether right and left are taken in a political or an epistemological sense).

I want, however, to point out a misleading error in the translation of the essay. In discussing Popper’s distinction between the human “worlds” of (1) material creation, (2) psychological creation, and (3) spiritual or intellectual creation, the term used by Vargas Llosa for the last of these, *mundo tercero*, is rendered as “third world” by the translator, who is then forced to differentiate this use of the English term from its more familiar sense, of underdeveloped or subaltern regions (the Spanish for this meaning would be *Tercer Mundo*, according to the translator’s note 3). But this ambiguity could have been avoided had it been realized that *mundo tercero* is just a direct rendering of Popper’s technical term “World Three,” introduced in *Objective Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon–Oxford UP, 1972) to distinguish the sphere of intellectual productions from that of material and psychological ones; likewise the translator’s “first world” and “second world” should have been “World One” and “World Two” (1020–21).

I might add that Vargas Llosa’s presentation of Popper’s views is not always faithful. There is an obvious inconsistency, for example, between the claim with which the essay begins, that in Popper’s view truth is not “discovered” but “invented” (1018), and later statements describing Popper as a believer in the absolute objectivity of knowledge (1019). Richard Hudelson has already ably diagnosed the confusion here (Forum, 106 [1991]: 535) and noted that Popper is not responsible for it. The confusion is significant enough to be worth emphasizing, however: it follows from posing an overly sharp dichotomy between invention and discovery on the epistemic level. On the one hand, to claim that the list of statements that we hold true is just an invention of ours threatens to dissolve *any* notion of objectivity; on the other, though, to characterize objectivity in absolutist terms as “the coincidence of . . . theory with the facts” threatens to dissolve the *human* dimension of inquiry (1019). This is the briefest possible statement of what motivates the debates over theoretical “realism” that have dominated much of recent philosophy, and the persistence of the issue shows that Popper’s own attempt to negotiate the antitheses involved has failed to satisfy later thinkers.

My last point concerns the adequacy not of Vargas Llosa’s presentation or of its translation but of Popperian philosophy itself. Theorists of criticism could benefit as much as philosophers of science have from studying and discussing Popper, and I hope that publication of this essay will help inspire such attention; but theorists will only benefit if they take a cue from their philosophical colleagues and approach Popper *critically*. A thoughtful scrutiny of Vargas Llosa’s discussion, for example, will soon reveal conceptual