

The use of the term „genotype” in taxonomy

by

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The question raised by professor Sirks in the previous note is by no means new, and Forcart is not at all the first to use the term genotype in taxonomy. On the contrary hardly anyone describing a new genus of animals nowadays does not fix a genotype for it, as such is explicitly prescribed by the international rules of zoological nomenclature.

The status of the word „genotype” in two different senses is clearly dealt with by Richter, on p. 25 of his excellent „Einführung in die zoologische Nomenklatur durch Erläuterung der internationalen Regeln” (Frankfurt a. M., 1943):

„Der Terminus Genotypus (engl. genotype, frz. génotype), von Ch. Schuchert 1897 aufgestellt, ist nachträglich von W. Johannsen in einem anderen Sinne verwendet worden. Obwohl in der Terminologie nicht die Priorität entscheidet (S. 11), wäre es zweckmässig, wenn die Genetik ihr jüngeres Homonym ersetzen würde. Denn in der Nomenklatur ist die Bezeichnung Genotypus so ausnahmslos in Gebrauch, dass die seit Dudich dreimal wiederholten Änderungsversuche aus Gründen der Kontinuität fehlschlagen mussten.”

The long and general use of this word both in taxonomy and genetics makes it extremely difficult, if not practically impossible, to replace it in either of these two branches of biology. The fact, however, that the term could be maintained during so long a period in both senses, shows that very little, if any, misunderstanding arose from its double use, and that replacement can be claimed on formal grounds only.