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WHAT CONSTITUTES PUBLICATION?¹

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YOUR secretary has assigned to me a Chinese puzzle. Kindly permit me, in accepting this assignment, to make one point unambiguous, namely, that in any views expressed to-day I am speaking only in my individual capacity, as a specimen of the genus *Homo* and not as secretary of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature. In fact, it is entirely conceivable that at some future time, as mouthpiece of the commission, I might express views at variance with the content of this paper.

A second point to be made clear is that no definition of zoological publication can be formulated which is not subject to debate, differences of opinion and criticism.

With this introduction I feel at liberty to discuss this very complicated theme.

"Publication" has numerous definitions, more or less subjective according to the particular field and goal under consideration. Our problem is "what constitutes zoological publication?"

Whatever subject we discuss, it is both interesting and instructive to consider the derivation of our terms in order to gain a starting point.

The English word "publication" comes from the Latin *publicatio*, which means "an adjudging to the public treasury, confiscation." Thus, when a zoological manuscript (legally the property of an individual) is published, its content becomes, by confiscation, the property of the *populus zoologicus*. Ergo, from the moment of publication the author has no more claim to the data or the ideas contained therein than has any other member of the zoological profession, except in so far as he may take out a copyright (which gives the exclusive right to multiply and to dispose of copies of an intellectual production—corresponding to a patent of an invention).

Consequently, the author has no more right to change a given published name than has any other zoologist—although the code of ethics provides that in case the author has inadvertently published a homonym, the colleague who notices this fact is to invite the attention of the author to it and, as an act of professional courtesy, to give him first opportunity to correct his error in technique.

The word *publicatio* is based on the Latin *publicare*, which means "to make public property, to seize and

¹ Address, by invitation, before American Ornithological Union, Nov. 15, 1927.

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