

December 31st, 1935

My dear Huxley,

I often think that international agreement about terminology and notation is worth much less than the trouble which it causes. However, I do think that symbols might often be unified, even when their names have very different meanings in different languages.

Personally I much prefer bx^k to kx . b seems a good letter because of its neutral connotation, and it stands in the formula for a value of no special interest, depending as it does on the units of measurement. The index has much more claim to be a rapport or relation, since it is the ratio of the relative growth rates of two measurements. It is also a characteristic of different organs or parts of the body, and one may think of the body as mapped in k contours.

I am certainly also against using different symbols for interspecific and intra specific comparisons. In English there is no convention demanding Greek letters as exponents.

Terminology is quite another matter to unify. It is, I believe, far best to leave it to develop as the ideas develop which it is intended to express. I think somewhere you have used some such term as trophic differentiation, or heterotrophism, which seems both descriptive and distinctive. Of course, here also this would lead to speaking of a special organ as hyper- or hypotrophic, and this has a pathological connotation, though not, I think, one that hurts. I feel that allo- suggests alternatives, but it might fairly be used for your earwig pincers.

The k at any part of the body might be called its growth coefficient, or its growth potential: constant is practically a useless word.

I am afraid I cannot be with the British Zoologists on Saturday.

About Shetlands, Ververs said he was putting me in touch with Kara, but he has not done so yet.

Yours sincerely,