available trivial names, many of which may never prove assignable to definite species, has been more firmly fixed at discouragingly vast proportions by this action.

If it is now clear that the subspecies trinomial is fast becoming an unquestioned and traditional fixture, it is equally clear, at least to us, that in its assumed function as a formal means of registering geographical variation within the species it tends to be both illusory and superfluous.

Mayr sums up our general philosophy perfectly in his very recent (1953) advice, offered in a different connection to those in attendance at the birth of a struggling taxonomy of viruses:

> The history of all classification, whether dealing with inanimate objects or with organisms, shows that early attempts of classification are based on superficial similarities and very often on single characters, while all improvements of classification are due to ever more penetrating analysis and a broadening of the basis of classification by including more and more characters. The soundest classifications are those built on the greatest possible number of clues. Reciprocally, it can be stated that, in sound classifications, there is usually a fair concordance of the various characters.

The application of this logic to our present knowledge of geographical variation cannot fail to stir a feeling that the trinomial has outlived its usefulness in taxonomy. We are encouraged to note that ornithologists have been among the first to apprehend this circumstance. Lack (1946), after grappling with trinomials in the European robin and finding them based uneasily on convergent polyphyletic characters and complex clinal trends, concludes:

> The use of subspecific names not only implies discontinuity where none may exist, but also unity where there may, in fact, be discontinuity. . . . Certainly, in the case of *Erithacus rubecula*, it is both simpler and more accurate to describe subspecific variation in terms of geographical trends, and to omit altogether the tyranny of subspecific names.

Mayr (1951), in reviewing twelve years of progress in the study of bird speciation, observes, "Instead of expending their energy on the describing and naming of trifling subspecies, bird taxonomists might well devote more attention to the evaluation of trends in variation."

We are inclined to feel even more strongly about the situation. We are convinced that unless our own sampling of the taxonomic literature has badly deceived us, we shall soon begin to observe the withering of the trinomial and its cumbersome appurtenances—the types, the tinted labels, the ponderous subspecies lists gravely entered in a thousand catalogues, the awkward labelling of masses of "intergrade" specimens, and all of the other procedural details that so unnecessarily consume the few effective working hours a modern taxonomist has. We anticipate the time when the taxonomist, if he wants to apply a formal Latinized name to his sample, will have first to produce indications that the population represented has the characteristics of a species. The more irresponsible or naive worker will not then be able, after a weak gesture in the direction of systematic study, to retire to the comfortable, safe nebulosity of a subspecies designation under a name having guaranteed availability against the future contingency that someone will perform the labor necessary to define a good species fitting his type. The study of geographic variation may eventually become just what the term implies, and not merely remain the subspecies mill it so largely is today.

The possibility that some International Congress not too far in the future will see fit to relegate unborn subspecific names to the nomenclatural limbo now occupied by the variety, the natio, the aberration, the forma, etc., inevitably brings up the question of the kind of reference shorthand we shall need to aid in the description of geographical variation. Fortunately, all the reference we require for this purpose is contained in (1) the correct determination to species, and (2) the locality and ecological data that will have to accompany any specimen worth studying. Thus, in publications, we can speak