

Editorial

The epistemological paradigm of this journal is parsimony. There are strong philosophical arguments in support of parsimony versus other methods of phylogenetic inference (e.g. Farris, 1983).

The high citation index of *Cladistics* shows that the journal is publishing some of the most groundbreaking empirical and theoretical research on the history of life, and we remain committed to the publication of outstanding systematics research. As a community of scientists, the Willi Hennig Society is always open to new methods and ideas, and to well-reasoned criticisms of old ones. However, we do not hold in special esteem any method solely because it is novel or purportedly sophisticated.

Phylogenetic data sets submitted to this journal should be analysed using parsimony. If alternative methods are also used and there is no difference among the results, the author should defer to the principles of the Society and present the tree obtained by parsimony. Unless there is a pertinent reason to include multiple trees from alternative methods, a tree based on parsimony is sufficient as an intelligible, informative and repeatable hypothesis of relationships, and articles should not be cluttered with multiple, often redundant, trees produced from other methods. If alternative methods give different results and the author prefers an unparsimonious topology, he or she is welcome to present that result, but should be prepared to defend it on philosophical grounds.

In keeping with numerous theoretical and empirical discussions of methodology published in this journal, we do not consider the hypothetical problem of statistical inconsistency to constitute a philosophical argument for the rejection of parsimony. All phylogenetic methods, including parsimony, may produce inconsistent or otherwise inaccurate results for a given data set. The absence of certain truth represents a philosophical limit of empirical science.

Cladistics will publish research based on methods that are repeatable, clearly articulated and philosophically sound. We believe these guidelines implement the vision of Willi Hennig (1965, p. 97), who said, “(i)nvestigation of the phylogenetic relationship between all existing species and the expression of the results of this research in a form which cannot be misunderstood, is the task of phylogenetic systematics.”

References

- Farris, J.S., 1983. The logical basis of phylogenetic analysis. In: Platnick, N.I., Funk, V.A. (Eds.), *Advances in Cladistics*. Columbia University Press, New York, Vol. 2, pp. 7–36.
- Hennig, W., 1965. Phylogenetic systematics. *Annu. Rev. Entomol.* 10, 97–116.

The Editors