

I am getting old

January 1, 2013

It is a fact of life that when a man is getting older his experience increases. Unfortunately it is balanced by problems with memory and sharp decline of mental abilities, in particular the ability to learn new things. What is worst, learning and understanding anything new takes much more time that it used to do. For a certain time I see all this in myself. Learning and understanding new ideas is more and more difficult and I tend to concentrate on well known things. I hope that I can continue my own research using more experience and less innovative ideas or mental power. I also hope that my experience may be (at least to some degree) useful to others. Anyway my work is evaluated by others. As long as their opinions are moderately positive and somebody is willing to pay me, I plan to continue my research. Later we will see. However I am afraid that as a result of those natural changes I stoped to be reliable in my evaluations of the work of other mathematicians. It is more likely than previously that

- I will judge a breakthrough to be a nonsense
- I will consider an original contribution as non-interesting
- a small and trivial contribution in an area that I know well I will praise as a great step forward

In 2013 I will turn 65 which is a statutory retirement age for males in Poland¹ I think that it is a good ocasion to do something to limit the possible damage. So starting from January 1, 2013 I will not formally evaluate mathematicians nor mathematical papers, dissertations etc. In particular I will not

1. referee papers intended for publication
2. referee doctoral dissertations

¹It is gradually increasing to 67 now. University professors have an extra right to work till 70.

3. write reports in habilitation or professorial procedures
4. write neither letters of recommendation nor evaluations for applicants for academic positions and other academic honors
5. write evaluations of grant proposals

I also resign from editorial boards of scholarly journals. Participation in such a board is either entirely honorary—and I do not think I need it any more—or involves selection of appropriate referee's and evaluation of papers based on novelty of ideas they contain. I am afraid that I am unable to perform such tasks properly.

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