

PHILOSOPHY

RETIRE RETIREMENT

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[May 29, 2008 Nature](#) has an interesting commentary by Peter Lawrence (66) about the archaic practice of retirement of active scientists at a determined age. It is a quite luxurious habit of "Doing what I like" while having a mostly pleasant life here on earth as a scientist, it may be a quite logical to prolong the scientific career.

Of course it may be also a true value also for a society to have an ingenious spirit also for another decade at work. Brenner is being cited as

I know many 35 year olds who should be retired and some 70-year olds who are the best post-doc you can ever find.

So it may be harsh reality (and even quite good) that the career of most scientists ends at a certain age. There is a saying here that "wrong ideas only die with their proponents". Any suggested "eternal tenure" will prohibit science progress. So I agree that

every institution ought to evaluate each elderly person and provide them with the means of continuing their work if they remain productive.

Certainly, I would only accept applications from people that are doing active work – first author papers beyond presidential addresses. Maybe fingerprints on pipettes in the lab or harddisk activities beyond powerpoint.

For all other ordinary people, there is still be an universe of of important things even outside of a formal profession. The problem at least here in Germany is not so much retirement at 65 but the nearly absent possibility to change any university affiliation at about 50 years...

