

JOHN SIMON GUGGENHEIM MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

FELLOW

Mr. Mario Bunge, Director
Foundations & Philosophy of
Science Unit-McGill Univ.
3479 Rue Peel
Montréal, P.Q., CANADA H3A 1W7

Candidate:

Torretti, Roberto

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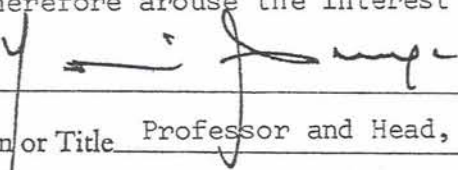
REPORT: While I realize that the Foundation is reluctant to award fellowships for a second time, I believe this is a clear case when an exception should be made. Indeed, Professor Torretti delivered the goods he promised when he got his first award--namely his book Philosophy of Geometry from Riemann to Poincaré-- and has just started to write what in a way will be a sequel to that work. Although he would certainly write this second book even without a Guggenheim fellowship, it would take him much longer and the result might not be as satisfactory, for his ambitious project calls for a great effort in concentration and also visits to well stocked libraries and some research centers to consult with some specialists.

Much has been written, of course, on the two relativities and the geometrical theories inherent in them. But nothing has been fully satisfactory: the philosophers have usually ignored the mathematics, the mathematicians have shown little physical insight and less philosophical interest, and the physicists have not cared much for the philosophical problems. Torretti has shown, in his previous work, an unusual ability to combine an understanding of physics with a philosophical analysis of mathematical theories and a keen sense of history. (He has taught himself mathematics and physics to the point that he can hold fruitful discussions with specialists in these fields--an extraordinary achievement for a philosopher.) I expect that his new book will therefore arouse the interest of physicists, mathematicians, philosophers

Signed

Position or Title

Address

 Date 1980.2.28

Professor and Head, Foundations & Phil. of Sci. Unit

3479 Peel St., Montreal H3A 1W7, Canada

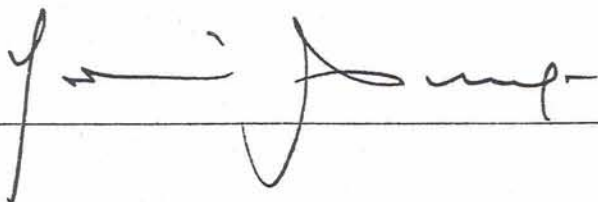
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and historians of ideas, many of whom are baffled by the new developments in general relativity and cosmology, as well as by some of the outrageous philosophical theses on these theories proposed by a number of specialists, such as that in relativity there is no becoming, that the special theory is based on a definition rather than on certain postulates, and that the universe has been carefully designed to as to become the home of man at the right moment. I can think of none but Torretti who could deal competently with these and other conceptual problems posed by two of the most revolutionary scientific theories in history.

Signed



Date

1980.2.28

