

Everett

Personnel

May 24, 1956.

Mr. Bomen C. Dees,
Program Director for Fellowships,
National Science Foundation,
Washington 25, D.C., USA.

Dear Mr. Dees:

Responding to your May 2 inquiry about Hugh Everett III, a National Science Foundation Fellow at Princeton during the present academic year, I have to say that I am more and more impressed by Everett's originality, mathematical ability, talent for expressing himself clearly orally and in writing, and self-sustaining research drive. His thesis - or the second draft of it, to be accurate - develops an idea quite original with him, to treat the problem of observation in quantum mechanics by including the observer himself within the framework of the mathematical formalism. Then the equations themselves become completely deterministic and the unavoidable indeterminism of all quantum systems comes in on a much more subtle level. The mathematics has many new features and has received a thorough development by Everett. The interpretation and the words that go with the formalism to show how to use it and what it means, make a much more difficult problem. Everett has done much with this most difficult problem, but he has still much more to do to escape all difficulties of misinterpretation. Being on leave of absence from Princeton this spring, I reviewed latest developments with Everett on a flight back to the States in mid-April, and at the beginning of this month spent a great deal of time reviewing Everett's work with Niels Bohr in Copenhagen. I feel that Everett ought to confer with Bohr directly, have written him so, and have taken steps to secure him travel funds for this purpose. My reason is simple: I feel Everett's very original work is destined to become widely known, and it ought to have the bugs ironed out of it before it is published rather than after!

I think of Everett as an example of a National Science Fellowship at its best. The man has an independent status, with no boss to tell him what to do. He is working side by side with the faculty in the pursuit of learning. He is an independent scholar in his own right.

Very sincerely yours,

John A. Wheeler.

OF / Ap's