Hi Jeffrey,

[Sorry for the semi-long email but there's lots to cover; I know you're busy and your time is appreciated... ;) ...]

Firstly -- Wow, it seems your publicity folks have been quite impactful lately! Since your team has issued a number of press releases mentioning me lately, I keep getting emails from people congratulating me on my new AGI funding windfall from the Jeffrey
Epstein IV Foundation.   (Though of course, I have to disappoint them
by telling them that, while you've been consistently and wonderfully helpful to my work over the years, there has been no big-time Epstein/OpenCog AGI funding event... yet ...)

Anyway -- on to immediate practical matters -- the time of year has come for me to email you and inquire about the possibility of ongoing research funding...

You may recall that my Hong Kong government research grant requires private donations amounting to 10% of the $$, and then the government will put up 90%.

Last year you donated $20K toward this grant, which was very much appreciat=d.

This year I have gotten approval for an increase in the Hong Kong government funding (technically: a separate grant running 2014-2015,
overlapping with the current grant which runs 2013-2014).   With the
increased funding, next year we will have 10 programmers working on OpenCog here in Hong Kong, which will be quite exciting.

The 10% payment for the two grants will be $45K in total, due by the end of 2013. If you could help with this, as you did last year, that would be fantastic. (Elsewise, to be quite frank, I have no ready way to come up with that amount of money except to liquidate my minimal pension fund from my university days ;p)

The new grant (2014-2015) is specifically for natural language dialogue, whereas the previous one (2013-2014) was aimed at robotics,
and the earlier one (2012-2013) was aimed at game characters.   As you
see, what they like to fund is something that sounds "applied", rather than core AGI research. However, the bulk of the $$ has always actually been spent on core AGI research. [The funding agency is ultimately fine with whatever you do, so long as it's in the vicinity of the proposal and you publish some papers.]

This brief wiki page

http://wiki.opencog.org/w/OpenCog_HK_2014_High_Level_Goals

summarizes what we've done in the last year (2013 so far), and what is planned for this fall and the next year. I'm happy to elaborate more
details for you if you wish.   It's exciting stuff... with this

increased grant funding, we should be able to finally make an honest effort at implementing a non-trivial subset of OpenCog... [I can also send you the full grant proposals if you wish, though they are somewhat a mix of science-ese and proposal-ese as is usual in such cases...]

Ah, and btw -- my in-depth book on how to build an AGI ("Engineering General Intelligence") is being published early next year, in two volumes, FINALLY ...

http://www.amazon.com/Engineering-General-Intelligence-Part-Cognitive/dp/94=2390266/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1384664281&sr=1-3&keyword==goertzel+engineering+general+intelligence

http://www.amazon.com/Engineering-General-Intelligence-Part-Architecture/dp=9462390290/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1384664311&sr=1-4&keyw=rds=goertzel+engineering+general+intelligence

I will send you copies when they are available... ;)

Finally -- while your help with the next 10% payment will be VERY much appreciated, it remains the case that our progress toward AGI would be accelerated dramatically with additional funding from a visionary such as yourself. The HK government money is very welcome yet has some strings attached -- basically you can only use it to hire "postdoc" / "research associate" type people, not experienced professionals. I can't use the money to pay myself, nor to pay someone with a decade or two of professional AI programming experience, nor experienced AI researchers for that matter.

If you were able to provide a higher level of help, this could of course dramatically accelerate our progress toward AGI.

In this spirit, I have been thinking of putting together a proposal for a cross-university collaboration on AGI, including adding a few senior staff to my own team at Hong Kong Poly U, some funds for Joscha and a couple assistants to work on the motivation/action-selection aspects, and for Itamar to hire some assistants to work on perception and action at UTK.   If you would be interested to consider such a proposal, in the vicinity of say US$750K/year for 3 years (with clearly defined interim milestones along the way), let me know. This level of course is not "AGI Brooklyn Project" scale, but it would still provide a very major boost to our AGI efforts.

Next, a slightly more personal update.... Right now I am spending half my time on OpenCog and half on Aidyia, our AI-based proto-hedge fund.
The hedge fund project is going OK; we've been doing lots of research and software development on machine learning applied to financial
markets, and expect to start trading perhaps Q2 of next year.   I have
some equity in Aidyia, so if it succeeds, I'll get a bunch of money at some point in N years. However, I am very bored with financial market analysis and eager to spend more of my time on AGI, especially with this additional OpenCog grant money. During 2014 I plan to segue into spending more and more time on OpenCog and the quest for AGI, which is what I really love, while continuing to help Aidyia with high-level AI advisement...

Assuming the fund project goes OK and we launch the fund in mid-2014 as expected, I will contact you about possible interest in putting AUM into the fund.

A 48 minute documentary was made about my and Hugo de Garis's
AI/robotics work in Xiamen in 2009, by the way.   It's not terribly
meaty science-wise, but, toward the end are some *great* conversations with a robot chat system that Ruiting (now my wife) and I built....
See http://singularityorbust.com if you have an hour to spare watching

it.   Beware it contains a lot of me mumbling about philosophy -- but
still, although it's somehat avant-garde in style, it did win a Best Documentary award at a film festival…

Thanks for reading all the way to the bottom of this long email, and for your ongoing, very much valued assistance!

By the way, when do you plan to visit Hong Kong? ;)

Yours,
Ben

P.S.
Ah -- also -- I will be on the US East Coast briefly over the holidays to visit my family… I'm guessing you're traveling during the holidays too, but if you happen to have a free couple hours on Dec 30 for example, I could journey from Delaware (where my mom lives) up to New York or down to Florida to confer with you…

Or of course, I am happy to talk on the phone at any time! … the time zones are a bit tricky, but for you I'll get up in the middle of the night or whatever…

--

Ben Goertzel, PhD

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"My humanity is a constant self-overcoming" -- Friedrich Nietzsche <?xml version=.0" encoding=TF-8"?> <!DOCTYPE plist

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