SDS PODCAST EPISODE 776 FIVE-MINUTE FRIDAY:

DEEP UTOPIA: AI COULD SOLVE ALL HUMAN PROBLEMS IN OUR LIFETIME

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This is Five-Minute Friday on Deep Utopia.

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Welcome back to The Super Data Science Podcast. I'm your host, Jon Krohn. Let's kick things off, like we have on Fridays recently, with a couple of reviews of the show. Couple more have come in. So Prof. Dr. Sigurd Schacht of the University of Applied Science in Ansbach, Germany and host himself of the Knowledge Science podcast said that: "I'm a big fan of the Super Data Science Podcast. It is a pleasure to listen to you and your guests." Thank you Prof. Dr. Sigurd Schacht. We also had Andrew Brodey, a data scientist at a global sourcing company in Pennsylvania, he said: "I listen to your podcast religiously and have learned so much… As a big fan of Your work and Super Data Science Podcast (which by the way in less than 2 years I listened all of the episodes) I can say, that SDS is the reason that brought me to self learning path that I'm currently on with pursuing a Data Science horizon." Nice. Thanks Andrew, and glad to be able to help you out on your Data Science journey.

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Thanks everyone for all the recent ratings and feedback on whatever podcasting platform that you use, on YouTube, really appreciate it and I will continue to keep an eye out for those and will read ones that I see on air like this.

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Now let's dig into the meat of today's episode, which focuses on Nick Bostrom's latest book, Deep Utopia, a book published a couple of weeks ago that delves into the possibilities of a future where artificial intelligence has solved humanity's deepest problems.

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Nick Bostrom, if you don't know who he is, is a renowned philosopher at the University of Oxford, is known for his thought-provoking work on existential risks and the potential impact of advanced AI on society. In his previous book, the mega-bestseller called Superintelligence, he argued that humanity faced a significant chance of being wiped out within the next century due to the development of dangerous forms of AI. In sharp contrast to that mega bestseller, in his latest book "Deep Utopia," Nick Bostrom explores a different scenario – one where AI progresses to such an extent that it can perform all economically valuable tasks at near-zero cost, and even tasks that we might consider be uniquely human, such as parenting, can be done better by AI.

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At first glance, this might sound more dystopian than utopian, but Bostrom argues otherwise. He envisions a "post-scarcity" utopia, where the need for work is greatly reduced, and humans have the freedom to pursue their passions and explore new experiences beyond our current ability to even conceive up these kinds of possibilities. As technology advances, the space of possible experiences for us could extend far beyond what our present brains can imagine.

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However, Bostrom also acknowledges that in such a post-scarcity world, physical resources, such as land, would still be limited. Interestingly, additionally, humans may continue to derive value from surpassing their fellow humans in various domains, leading to the persistence of "positional goods" – so these are goods that boost the status of their owners and so are inherently scarce.

In addition to being a post-scarcity world, Bostrom also contemplates a "post-instrumental" world, where AIs become superhuman at all tasks and so humans are no longer needed as instruments at all. This, going back to examples like child care, being handled better by AIs than humans and so we are no longer needed as instruments. This raises the question of what purpose humans would have in such a world. While some might find joy in activities with intrinsic value, such as eating tasty food, others might seek out challenges, like colonizing new planets to re-engineer civilization from scratch. Although again, that seems to me like something maybe in that kind of world AIs could do better than us as well, so I don't know what else is left, other than activities with intrinsic value, just having peace in atelic activities and enjoying being live and all the fruits of that. I don't know, to me, personally, at least it sounds utopic, even if there are these kinds of quandaries that come up.

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And one of those quandaries is this idea of a "paradox of progress" where although most humans want a better world, if technology becomes too advanced, they may lose all sense of purpose. So yeah, this is the paradox of progress. Economists have long believed that humans have unlimited wants and desires, but an AI utopia would certainly put us to the test on that front. Again, something I would be willing to try and figure out. As we ponder the possibilities presented in "Deep Utopia," it becomes clear that the implications of advanced AI are both exciting and daunting. The book challenges us to consider what we value most as humans and how we might find meaning and purpose in a world where our biggest problems have been solved by technology.

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I should provide a disclaimer that I haven't actually read "Deep Utopia" myself yet, I'm basing this episode on literary reviews of it, but if you'd like to delve into the pros and cons of a utopic future facilitated by AI

technologies that are taking off today like deep learning transformer architectures then Nick Bostrom's latest book could be the thought-provoking exploration you're looking for. Some of the early Amazon reviews do complain about quality of the printing paper and that the book could made the same points in fewer pages, but a book like this by a human AI thinker, by a leading AI thinker, I have no doubt would allow you to contemplate deeply on the future of human desires, the potential for limitless experiences, and the challenges we face in finding purpose in a post-scarcity and post-instrumental world. As we as data scientists continue to push the boundaries of technology, there are questions that we might be happy to grapple with in the decades to come.

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For me personally, I'm excited by books like "Deep Utopia" because it gets us all thinking big about how, in our lifetime, AI could help us realize abundant energy, wholesome nutrition for everyone on the planet, dramatically extended lifespans, high-quality personalized education for all, freedom from violence, freedom of expression, sustainability, cultural preservation and more good stuff like that.

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All right, I hope you are excited to explore, bringing about this utopia yourself as well. That's it for today's episode. If you enjoyed today's episode or know someone who might, consider sharing this episode with them, leave a review of the show on your favorite podcasting platform, tag me in a LinkedIn or Twitter post with your thoughts, I'll respond to those, and if you aren't already, be sure to subscribe to the show. Most importantly, however, we hope you'll just keep on listening. Until next time, keep on rockin' it out there and I'm looking forward to enjoying another round of the Super Data Science Podcast with you very soon.