URL: https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/big-data-is-a-meaningless-term

In response to a question from investor Ann Miura-Ko, Ayasdi Co-Founder and CEO Gurjeet Singh explains why he believes, "big data is a meaningless term." Born out of his love for optimistic science fiction, Singh also describes why it's worth pursuing a computational approach to building autonomous systems that can benefit humanity.

Transcript

So Big Data has gotten a lot of hype, and Ayasdi clearly fits into that sector in some way.. So what's wrong with the term Big Data or is there something wrong with the term Big Data, and how do you describe that market? Yes, so Big Data in my mind is a meaningless term.. It has - I will give you an example.. I was - I met someone at a party recently, and this guy was building a small business in which they would approach big companies and make product videos.. And he was trying to raise financing and so he was picking my brain as to how do you go about it and he said I have an idea, I think I should raise it - like I should spin it as a Big Data company and then I would be able to raise financing.. And so I said how is this a Big Data company? He said "well video files, they're pretty large!" It's starting to - I think that this whole Big Data thing is at a stage where you go to an investor and you just whisper Big Data and they might give you some money.. And so it's a meaningless term, right.. I think the more, the far reaching impact of this movement, I don't think there is a name for it yet, is pretty large actually.. And I draw my inspiration from science fiction.. I grew up reading a lot of science fiction and if you read enough science fiction, there are - you see two types of futures that our species seems to have imagined..

There is the one type of future in which everyone kills themselves and either the technology runs amok or people are just not that great.. And then, that's not very interesting.. There is this other type of future in which it is a post-governance world in which you have free time and a lot of work is taken care of with machines and people basically just contemplate the universe.. And in that future you don't see people writing SQL queries or you don't see people using business intelligence software.. You see a world in which autonomous systems deal with large streams of data and then form your life to make it a better - to make it better.. And I believe that's what we can achieve with the data.. I don't believe that Big Data in itself actually is trying to achieve it.. Big Data is just database people trying to sell more database software...