

Why our morality defies being programmed by algorithms

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Künstliche
Intelligenz
und
der Sinn des
Lebens



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the Meaning of Life**
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Richard David Precht, born in 1964, is a philosopher, journalist, and author, and one of the most distinctive intellectuals in German-speaking countries. He is an honorary professor of philosophy at the Leuphana University in Lüneburg and at the Hanns Eisler Academy of Music in Berlin. His books *Who Am I and If So How Many?*, *Love: A Disorderly Emotion* and *The Art of Not Being an Egoist* are international bestsellers and have been translated into 40 languages. Since 2012 he has been the moderator of the philosophy program Precht on the ZDF television network.

As the climate crisis and exploitation of natural resources threaten the very basis of life on our planet, tech companies have set their sights on developing increasingly sophisticated artificial intelligence. Their goal: to create a "super intelligence" that can do everything humans can, only "optimized". They aim to program these machines with morality, although their approach hinges on an utterly inadequate understanding of what it means to be human.

In this urgent essay, Richard David Precht articulates the impossibility of this venture not least because morality cannot be reduced to a line of code. Morality reflects our emotional connections to the world, connections informed by irrational, and thus unpredictable, values. While A.I. advocates program machines to meet the supposed criteria for happiness, Precht demonstrates that what's most important to humans isn't happiness – it's meaning. And meaning represents far more than the sum of happy moments.

Precht therefore argues against the "ethical programming" of computers and robots and highlights examples of what gives humans a true sense of meaning in this world – and what doesn't. This is the real starting point for successful (co)existence in the twenty-first century, an age in which we must embrace the fate we share, not with machines, but with plants and animals – the antithesis of artificial intelligence!

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"Written with his heart on the page [...], this book is a passionate plea for a change of mentality, a different culture in treating the earth." *Badische Zeitung*

"How happy does technological progress make us and where does it lead? If you search for smart thoughts and answers, Precht is the right author." *Die Zeit*

"Precht, the jack-of-all-trades among German intellectuals, [...] deconstructs the current socially dominant belief that there is no alternative to total digital transformation." *Galore*