

An urgently needed wake-up call from Germany's most famous philosopher

Richard David
Precht

Von der Pflicht

Eine Betrachtung



GOLDMANN

Professor Dr. Richard
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About Duty

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An examination

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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.

In 2020 and 2021, the time of the Covid 19 pandemic, a remarkable spectacle occurred. While by far the majority of people showed empathy with the weak and particularly vulnerable, a minority turned away from their duty as citizens and rebelled against government measures installed to protect the health of all citizens.

For Richard David Precht, this was an occasion to reflect on what is actually the duty of the welfare and social state to its citizens and what is the duty of its citizens. What do we owe the state and what are the rights of others over us? The question presents a dilemma: On the one hand, we have been conditioned to be selfish consumers; on the other hand, the state needs exactly the opposite to function, namely solidary citizens. With that in mind, couldn't it be helpful to strengthen the citizens' sense of duty in a liberal democracy by introducing two years of compulsory service? One after graduation and one upon retirement, in order to give all citizens the opportunity to experience themselves within their duty to the state and also to others?