



## Part 6. Nietzsche against the Nazis

### *27. Five differences*

Now we can ask the big pay-off question. After surveying National Socialist theory and practice and engaging with Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, we can ask: How much do Nietzsche and the Nazis have in common? Or to put it another way: To what extent were the Nazis justified in seeing Nietzsche as a precursor of their movement?

We know that Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, and most of the major intellectuals of National Socialism were admirers of Nietzsche's philosophy. They read him avidly during their formative years, recommended him to their peers, and incorporated themes and sayings from Nietzsche into their own writings, speeches, and policies. To what extent were they accurate and justified in doing so?

In my judgment on this complicated question, a split decision is called for. In several very important respects, the Nazis were perfectly justified in seeing Nietzsche as a forerunner and as an intellectual ally. And in several important respects, Nietzsche would properly have been horrified at the misuse of his philosophy by the Nazis.

Let us start with the key differences between Nietzsche and the Nazis. Here I want to focus on five important points.