

ing about the Germany of the nineteenth-century: “between the old Germanic tribes and us Germans there exists hardly a conceptual relationship, let alone one of blood.”⁹⁰ So rather than being proud of their ancient history and accomplishments, Nietzsche believes Germans of his day should feel ashamed by comparison.

At the same time, German intellectual and cultural life is prominent the world over—and Nietzsche deplors that fact. Contemporary Germany is a center of softness and slow decay, so Nietzsche believes that Germany’s weaknesses are infecting the rest of the world. As he puts it in *The Will to Power*, “Aryan influence has corrupted all the world.”⁹¹

So rather than celebrating contemporary Germany and its power, as the Nazis would do, Nietzsche is disgusted by contemporary Germany.

This leads us to a third major point of difference.

30. On anti-Semitism: valid or disgusting?

The most repulsive sign of Germany’s decline, Nietzsche writes—and this may be initially surprising—is its hatred of the Jews, its virulent and almost-irrational anti-Semitism.

Nietzsche, we know, has said some harsh things about the Jews—but again, that is a set of issues that is easily misinterpreted, so we must be careful.

In connection with all of the negative things Nietzsche has said about the Jews, we must also note the following.

Nietzsche speaks of “the anti-Jewish stupidity” of the Germans.⁹² He speaks of those psychologically disturbed indi-



⁹⁰ GM 1:11.

⁹¹ WP 142; 145.

⁹² BGE 251.

viduals who are most consumed with self-hatred and envy. He uses the French word *ressentiment* to describe such nauseating individuals and says that such *ressentiment* is “studied most easily in anarchists and anti-Semites.”⁹³

Pathological dishonesty is a symptom of such repulsive characters: “An antisemite certainly is not any more decent because he lies as a matter of principle.”⁹⁴

So, to summarize: Nietzsche saves some of his most condemnatory language for Germans who hate Jews—he considers them to be liars, stupid, disturbed, self-hating pathological cases for psychologists with strong stomachs to study.

So it seems a reasonable inference that Nietzsche would have been disgusted by the Nazis, for the Nazis absorbed into their ideology the worst possible kind of anti-Semitism and pursued their anti-Jew policies almost to the point of self-destruction.⁹⁵

31. On the Jews: admirable or despicable?

But how does this fit with the harsh things we know Nietzsche said about the Jews? This takes us to a fourth point of difference between Nietzsche and the Nazis.

For all of the negative things Nietzsche says about the Jews, he also respects them and gives them high praise.

Here is a representative quotation from *Beyond Good and Evil*: “The Jews, however, are beyond any doubt the strongest, toughest, and purest race now living in Europe.”⁹⁶

⁹³ GM 2:11.

⁹⁴ A 55.

⁹⁵ Connecting here to the fascinating “What-if” history question: What if the Nazis had put the Holocaust on hold and devoted the vast resources used there instead to military purposes where needed in WWII?

⁹⁶ BGE 251.