

intellectually means taking their positions seriously, understanding them, and knowing how to argue against them.

The second rule of politics is: *Know your enemy*. The first rule of politics is: *Know yourself*. Know what you stand for and why. Know what matters to you fundamentally and what you are willing to do to achieve it—and, when necessary, to fight to defend it.

That is a very large project, and that is why a culture's philosophers and other intellectuals do important work—or, if they get it wrong, great damage.

As a beginning to that project, let me indicate a clear direction to start in.

## **41. Principled anti-Nazism**

Philosophically and politically, the Nazis stood for five major principles: They stood for collectivism, for instinct and passion, for war and conflict, for authoritarianism, and for socialism.

### *National Socialist Principles:*

- Collectivism
- Instinct, passion, “blood”
- War and zero-sum conflict
- Authoritarianism
- Socialism

That means we can identify the principles that, in each case, are the direct opposite of what the Nazis stood for:

*National Socialist Principles:*

- Collectivism
- Instinct, passion, “blood”
- War and zero-sum conflict
- Authoritarianism
- Socialism

*Anti-Nazi Principles:*

- Individualism
  - Reason
  - Production and win/win trade
  - Liberalism
  - Capitalism
- The Nazis stood for collectivism. The opposite of that is a philosophy of *individualism* that recognizes each individual’s right to live for his or her own sake.
  - The Nazis stood for instinct and passion as one’s basic guides in life. The opposite of that is a philosophy of *reason* that has a healthy confidence in the power of evidence, logic, and judgment to guide one’s life.
  - The Nazis stood for war and conflict as the best way to achieve one’s goals. The opposite of that is a philosophy that encourages *productiveness and trade* and the best way to achieve one’s goals in life.
  - The Nazis stood for political authoritarianism and top-down leadership. The opposite of that is a philosophy that leaves individuals maximum *freedom* to live their lives by their own choice and direction, respecting the equal right of other individuals to do the same.
  - The Nazis stood for socialism and the principle of central direction of the economy for the common good. The op-

posite of that is the system of *free market capitalism*, with individual producers and consumers deciding for themselves what they will produce and what they will spend their money on.

As a start, the principles in the right-hand column are the best antidote to National Socialism we have going. Each of those principles is controversial in our time, and I expect they will continue to be so for generations to come. But they represent the starkest philosophical contrast to National Socialism possible, and they form the first line of defense against future incarnations of Nazism. There is no better place to start than understanding them thoroughly.

I will end on a provocative note: The Nazis knew what they stood for. Do we?

