

2. THE IDEOLOGY OF NAZISM

One of the ways that I learned about my grandparents' past was through National Socialist (Nazi) perspectives expressed by my grandmother. If I hadn't studied and known about this ideology previously at university, these perspectives would have passed me by, and possibly become integrated into my own way of thinking. Sometimes it's important to consider the many ideas we inherit from our communities and ask ourselves whether and why we agree or don't agree with them.

National Socialism or Nazism is an ideology associated with Adolf Hitler, as laid out in his autobiography and political manifesto, "Mein Kampf" (1925-6). It represents a combination of authoritarianism, racist views including anti-Semitism, and aggressive nationalism. At the same time, it purported to have a strong socialist or people's element to it, though the Nazis' conception of the people was exclusive and limited to so-called Aryans. It is a form of fascism, a political movement originally associated with Benito Mussolini in Italy.

One of the things we need to ask ourselves is: Why would so many, including my grandparents, want to become a part of a movement that was clearly violent, aggressive and against the existence of certain groups of people they had hitherto co-existed peacefully with? Why would apparently civilized people want this? You can find some insights in my discussions with Oma in the book.

After WWII an international order that prioritized universal human rights was established to prevent the politics of discrimination and exclusion and its terrible ultimate consequences, borne out under Nazism, from ever being allowed to unfold again. What happens in a world where we don't put human rights first? In this module, you'll explore this question.

- 2.1 What can we learn about the ideology of Nazism from *The Pendulum*?
- 2.2 What are the logical consequences in society of this thinking? What happens when individuals and political, religious and or social groups do not protect universal human rights or when no conception of universal human rights is present?