

“After all of this, should not the world tremble
and every person mourn?”

My paintings are usually joyful; through them I want to show how life could be, rather than what it is. I have painted the illustrations in this book because I felt that, as one who was there, I could justifiably attempt to describe the desolation of those who were part of the Holocaust.

In one painting I use barbed wire to illustrate ghettos, concentration camps, isolation. Even outside there is no hope. The shred of the yellow star represents being branded and tattooed. It suggests loneliness, deprivation of dignity, and the residue of the survivors; tattooed persons become merely numbers in a sequence, impersonal objects, no longer individuals. Red typifies the existence of horror, torture, suffering, bleeding. Black symbolizes hopelessness, despair, death. Even after death there is no peace. Each line, form, and color is a different shade of sorrow.

“Even the stones weep.”

In the memorial cemetery where my father is, walls with the names of those whose whereabouts are known by location contain quotations. By including some of these quotations (in liberal translation) here, I have tried to give the illusion of walking with me in the cemetery to share how I felt and what I felt among the weeping gravestones—in reality and in my dreams.

Let these words be the flowers for those who did not return.



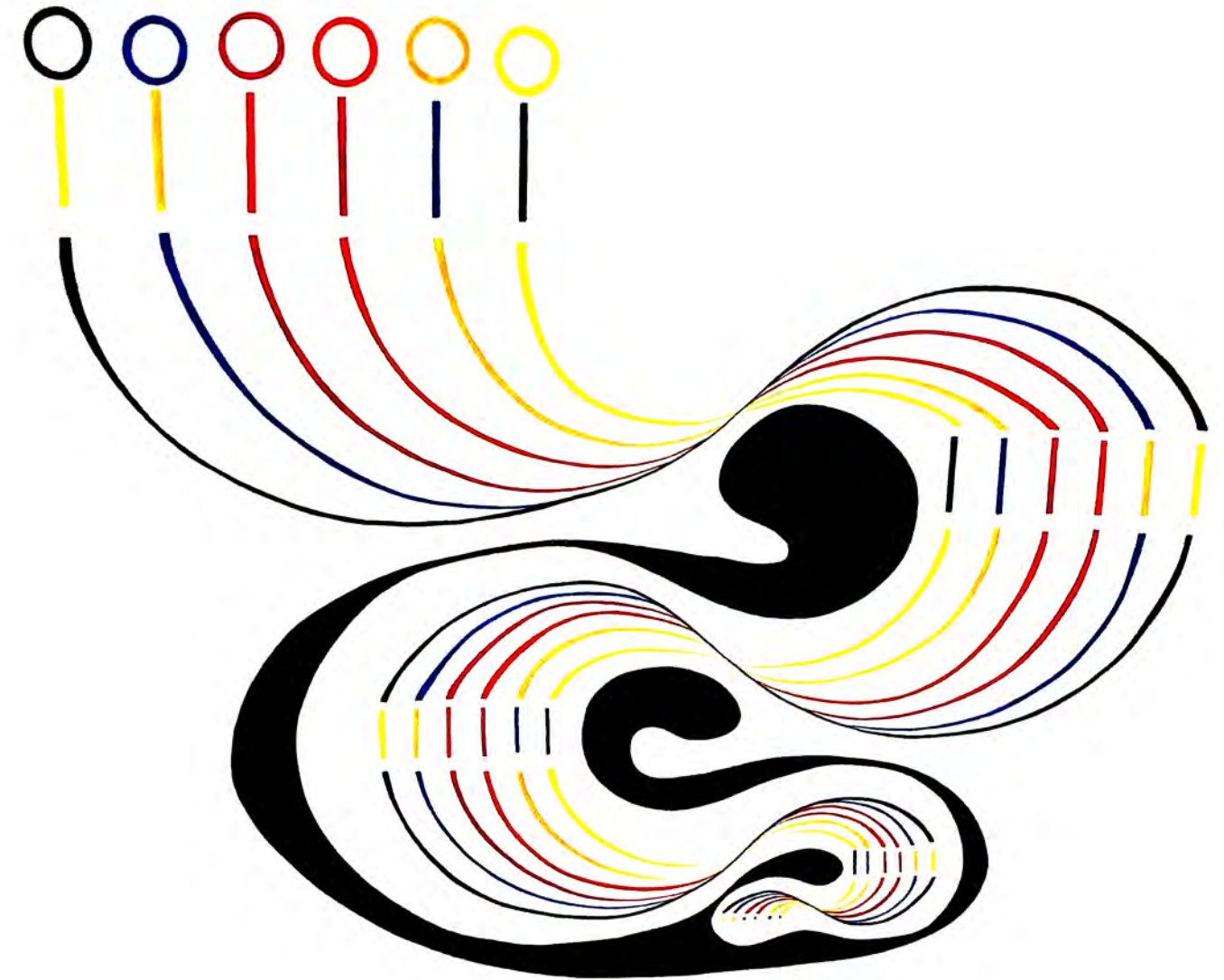
As beautiful pearls are produced by the suffering of an oyster, so the Holocaust created beautiful heroes—not only among the victims and survivors but also among the others who risked their own lives in order to help those who were persecuted and to save their lives—people like my old nurse, Anna, and her family.

Even among the most sorrowful memories, the humanitarian acts performed by compassionate individuals shine above the dark side of brutality.

I wrote this book because good can be learned even from one of the worst human tragedies. In life—and even in death—the human spirit, love, and fine principles lead the way for the survivors.

When we reach the end of our days and make an inventory of our actions, we should conclude: “I did the right thing—for myself and for others. My time was spent well and my life has been valuable and worthwhile.” We have to make a choice either to become a suppressor, taking advantage of the misery of others, or to remain humane even in an inhumane environment.

The light from the yellow star should always remain with us.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Robert O. Fisch is a native of Budapest, Hungary, and a survivor of a Nazi concentration camp. After the war, Dr. Fisch returned to Hungary and completed medical school, and then went to America in 1957. He became a medical intern at the University of Minnesota in 1958 and has been at the University ever since. He has been a professor of pediatrics since 1979. Dr. Fisch is known internationally for his clinical research on PKU (phenylketonuria), a genetic disease. He studied art in Budapest and Minneapolis and has a distinguished second career as a visual artist.

For decades, Dr. Fisch's feelings about the Holocaust and his experience were only an internal, private matter. Now he believes his experience can be applied positively through *Light from the Yellow Star: A Lesson of Love from the Holocaust*.

LIGHT FROM THE YELLOW STAR

A Lesson of Love from the Holocaust

DR. ROBERT O. FISCH is an eminent pediatrician and visual artist, as well as Holocaust survivor. *Light from the Yellow Star* offers a narrative of his experience in a Nazi concentration camp through eloquent paintings and moving prose. The text exudes an optimism and hopefulness about life, even though it recounts a personal story of terrible suffering.

Quotations throughout the text are liberal translations from the gravestones in the memorial concentration camp cemetery in Budapest where the author's father, a victim of the camps, is buried. "Even the stones weep." "Even death could not come between us." They act as the book's second narrative, because the reader takes an imaginary walk through the Budapest cemetery by encountering these lines while progressing through the book.

"I honestly feel that the material of this book is not a product of my own abilities. It came from within me. I was merely a tool, an instrument of its expression. The book is an attempt to describe a feeling, a cry in the dark; it might even be a spark of hope in the darkness. What I would like to be remembered is not the horror but the beauty created by human virtue and enlightened by the spirit created by suffering. What could those silent, slaughtered millions ask us now? To hate, and to be unforgiving (the very qualities that led to their demise)? Unlikely. I believe they would want us to have understanding, compassion, and love. The message that I would like to send is: Remain human—even in inhuman circumstances."

—DR. ROBERT O. FISCH