

INTRODUCTION

Not being a scientist, I turned to my friend Frank Oppenheimer to guide me into an understanding of various principles of science while I was editing THE RAINBOW BOOK in 1974-1975. He kindly acted as my editorial advisor on the entire physics section in that interdisciplinary survey of the art, physics, and metaphysics of color. He also offered to contribute a short statement on the physical nature of light. His statement of luminous concision reads like a poem. With his permission, I have used it again as the prologue to this collection of my poems. In fact, it was Frank's prose-poem that inspired this collection.

At other times during the 12 years I served on the Advisory Board of the Exploratorium, Frank and I spent many hours talking about the concept of complementarity. He told me it was the subject that he and his brother (J. Robert Oppenheimer) talked about more than any other subject. Frank was very fond of my 1978 collection HEAVY LIGHT: HAIKU ON THE THEME OF MODERN PHYSICS & ANCIENT WISDOM. From time to time, Frank and I would design small conversation groups, using "think tank" methodology. During one of these "conversation groups" designed to involve "Artists, Scientists, & Humanists," Frank challenged me to write something about complementarity. My response to Frank's challenge was ELECTRO-MAGNETISM: A COLLECTION OF POEMS ON THE THEME OF COMPLEMENTARITY. The first edition was printed in 1981. The first public reading, at the invitation of Jack Weller, was at the 1983 "Quality Conference" at John F. Kennedy University where I had joined the graduate faculty of the Art+Consciousness MFA program.

Most of the haiku written in English follow the standard model of three unrhymed lines made up of 5, 7, and 5 syllables. I love that verse form and have used it often. I started to use it for this collection, then changed my mind. I developed a new form. I wanted these word-images to be as simple as a sentence but also to carry some of the weight of being an aphorism. I also changed the viewpoint. In HEAVY LIGHT, I stayed close to the facts or accepted theories of contemporary physics. In ELECTRO-MAGNETISM, I moved from the literal to the metaphorical. By making parallel the sun/moon image and the electric/magnetic image I tried to evoke the essential nature of the bimodal value clusters that operate at the core of cultures.

Many cultural historians have taken over the right-brain/left brain model

from psychophysiology and are finding it a useful tool in the analysis of psycho-social systems. I have found these little poems useful when I teach World Art and World Religions. They provide my students with a taste of how the structure of values (or what I call the “architecture of awareness”) changes over time. This edition of E-M (as some of my students call it) is dedicated to all the students in my classes on World Art, World Religions and World Mythology at California State University, Hayward, and at Humboldt State University, Arcata.

FLG

Northbank, January 1995