Art 106 Reading 1

Natural Born Cyborgs Chapters 1 and 2

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NBC Chapter 1:

In chapter 1 Clark discusses the tradition definition of a cyborg from Clynes and Kline, two medical professionals who's idea for a cyborg is the addition of technological enhancements onto the body that can replace missing functions or create new ones. The example is given of the rat with the osmosis pump slowly injecting the rat with chemicals and acting as a regulatory filtration system without the rat's active involvement. Clark expands on Clynes and Kline's definition however, and outlines how the brain thinks about technological enhancements as extensions of our own body. In his opinion, if our brain sees an object as familiarly as part of its own body and can use the technology to its fullest potential, it is still integrated into our conscious even if it may not be directly connected to our physical body, like a laptop or a smart phone.

Q1) Summarize the distinction(s) from the traditional Kline & Clynes definition of the cyborg vs. the one that Clark is proposing?

Clynes and Kline's definition of a cyborg involves enhancements in order to better adapt to the environment, but Clark proposes cyborgs as simply humans with technological interface worked into their body. These could potentially be used to adapt to a new environment, but also could be used to complete simple tasks easier. Clark's idea is all about the complex nature of animal and machine relationships. Clynes and Kline both talk about cyborgs as an organism with technological

improvements made onto the body to either replace missing functions or improve existing ones. Clark however is only concerned with how the brain thinks of the technology. If the brain sees an interface as an extension of our own body then it has become an extension of us and therefore a technological enhancement.

Q2) What kind of model might you have that is different than this?

I think a cyborg is something that has to be integrated with technology. For example, someone who has a computer chip in their arm isn't a cyborg unless that chip could be used by the person in order to do something. A cyborg should be able to use their mechanical components as extensions of their own body. I think a new model could be about a technology with a conscious instead of a technologically integrated human. If a computer had a brain or could do anything it wants, it wouldn't have to use a tool and be limited in any way by its features. A true cyborg to me would be one that is not hindered by technology at all and would instead be able to use technology as second nature.

Q3) What other kinds of hybrids are there that might share some commonalities with cyborgs? What do they share in common?

I think something similar to human machine relationships would be human animal relationships. I can think of the example of a human riding a horse and the horse acting as an extension of the human's legs, moving where they control them to. If the horse was instead a machine with four legs, he would be a cyborg because the machine would be under his control.

NBC Chapter 2:

Q1) Summarize a definition as described in the book of what the significant attributes are for 'opaque' technology vs. as a 'transparent' technology.

Transparent technology is technology that is so far integrated into our society that it is transparent and seemingly effortless to use. Opaque technology on the other hand requires skill and knowledge to use and does not come naturally to the biological organism

Q2) Give some examples of technology that might be better served if more transparent and others that should be more opaque.

I think that cars are one example of an opaque technology that we should be working to become more transparent. For example you cannot maneuver a car as well as you can maneuver your physical body, but if you could it would make cars much easier and more responsive to what the driver wants. Guns on the other hand are a technology more on the translucent side, I feel. The hardest part of using a gun is aiming. The gun takes care of everything else, making it so easy to use. When the world developed muskets using gunpowder, guns were much harder to use, and would have fallen into the opaque category. I think if guns were more opaque and took more skill to learn to use and control, a lot less people would be able to use these destructive devices after simply picking it up.

Q3) Does the watch and dictionary example discussed in the book, seem valid to you? Why?

The example seems valid. I think that if the technology acts like a responsive extension of our body and using it is like second nature, then the technology is transparent. This could mean that is has to be integrated into our bodies or ourselves. When we desire something, if a technology is readily available to assist us in completing the task, I would say it is translucent.

Mod Synth Artists and Transforming Noise into Music

Q1) What is a good definition in your own words about what modular art is about.

Modular art is about using modular sound transforming technology to make new sounds or change existing sounds.

Q2) How does the idea of co-creation work in modular art? who are the players?

Co-creation can exist in modular art just like any other medium. Different people can put in different parts of a final whole, making the final product come from different influences.

Q3) How would you characterize the kind of performances that goes on with modular synth players vs normal musical performance with traditional instruments.

I think the performances are similar in the fact that these performers are using their tools to make sounds and do a performance. A modular synth board is just like any other instrument, it just uses electronic components rather than other methods to make the sounds.

Q4) What do you think are the key features of a modular synth systems that makes it unique over regular instruments. Asked another way, what does every modular synth need?

Every modular synth mod needs the assistance of electricity and other electronic components. It needs speakers for example because it makes sound in an electronic medium, it needs a device to transform that signal into a physical sound for our ears to hear.

Q5) In the context of the video on transforming Noise to Music, what do you see (if any) to nature of modular synth machine and human collaboration? What are the machines doing vs what are the humans doing, that might be different from the 'normal' use of humans as direct tool users.

The machines are the actual manipulating tools while the user is the user of the tool. Kind of like a person learning to use a program for use as a tool to make other things.