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My BlackBerry and Me: Forever One or Just Friends?

Abstract

The idea that something about cognition lies outside the brain and even the skin is central to a number of significant recent developments in cognitive science and philosophy of mind. Loosely grouped under the label, 'situated cognition', all variants of this view hold that the various contexts of cognition are crucial to it in some way. However, there is a big division over what way. Indeed, there are a number of divisions over what way but the one I will focus on is whether contexts are just causally linked to cognition or are actually part of cognition, some contexts at any rate. However crucial researchers of the former persuasion take context to be, they do not mess around with the traditional boundary between mind and world. Researchers of the second persuasion do challenge that boundary. They hold that in some respects the mind actually extends beyond the brain and skin, that something outside the body constitutes part of the mind. This idea can take at least three forms:

- (i) A claim that there is a normative and therefore a social dimension to mindedness (the normativity of mind hypothesis),
- (ii) A claim that semantic or representational content consists of a relationship between representational vehicles and something else (externalism).
- (iii) The hypothesis of the extended mind (Clark and Chalmers 1995).

After a short introduction to situated cognition and the normativity view, we will zero in on externalism and the extended mind hypothesis. The internet and wireless appliances such as the BlackBerry are an interesting test case, especially for the latter. On a credible view of the boundaries of the mind that we will introduce, we will find nothing supporting the idea that the mind extends beyond brain or skin.

Biographical Note

Andrew Brook (D.Phil., Oxon.) is Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Institute of Cognitive Science at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. He is the author of *Kant and the Mind* (Cambridge 1994) and, with Paul Raymont, *A Unified Theory of Consciousness* (MIT Press forthcoming) and has written or edited five other books and about 80 papers, chapters, etc. He was recently President of the Canadian Philosophical Association.