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The Cellphone as a Conceptual Category

Cellphones have certain physical parts, functions, and features, and people know a lot about these. My interest is NOT in what people know about such physical characteristics of cellphones but in the way people think and feel about them. What do they find most important about them? What do they mean to them? How do they relate to them emotionally? How do they evaluate them as objects of utility?

Using the methods of cognitive linguistics, I will explore such nonphysical aspects of cellphones. In particular, I will ask WHICH nonphysical aspects of cellphones are conceptualized by people and HOW these aspects are conceptualized.

The answers to these questions can potentially benefit us in two ways: (1) we can achieve a better understanding of the cellphone as a conceptual category and (2), at a more practical level, given the insights provided by such an analysis, we can better meet some of the challenges that cellphones present in our culture.

Zoltán KÖVECSES is Professor of Linguistics in the Department of American Studies at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. His main research interests include the conceptualization of emotions, the study of metaphor and idiomaticity, the relationship between language, mind and culture, and American slang and American English. He is also working as a lexicographer, and is the author of several Hungarian-English, English-Hungarian dictionaries. His most recent books include *Language, Mind, and Culture. A Practical Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2006; *Metaphor in Culture. Universality and Variation*, Cambridge University Press, 2005; *Metaphor. A Practical Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2002; *American English. An Introduction*, Peterborough, Canada: Broadview Press, 2000; and *Metaphor and Emotion*, Cambridge University Press, 2000. He has taught at several American and European universities, including the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, Rutgers University, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Hamburg University, Odense University, University of Granada, and the University of California at Berkeley. He is currently working on the issue of what it means to understand a culture from a cognitive point of view and on the notion of abstract concepts. E-mail: zkovecses@ludens.elte.hu.

