A touch of grounding

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Dan Dennett: **Consciousness as an Evolved User-Illusion**

The practice of sharing information in communicative actions with others, *giving and demanding reasons*, is what creates our personal user-illusions.

Do *infants* really have zero consciousness / User-Illusion until they start to trade reasons?
# Algorithms, infant development

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**Onset of trading reasons**

How about: proto-reasons, proto-User-Illusion?
Grounding

The **Predictive Coding** substrate:

- delivers *competence without comprehension*
- its form and function are *grounded in survival*

Yet when **hypotheses** formed within the PC substrate begin to be *externally expressed* then:

- an **ulterior grounding** arises: Evidence gets shared and we ask it to be grounded ...

- in reality - tending towards that **ontological grounding** valued by philosophers and scientists.
Ontological impetus

On first encountering empty space and returning into contact with external surfaces: mother’s arms etc. Three factors may coalesce in an infant:

- **instantiation** of the Bayesian hyper-prior, in the PC substrate, to stipulate no two solids occupy the same physical space — see A.Clarke 2013

- ‘**proto-reason**’: grounding of explicit spatial comprehension – anchoring subsequent empirical learning from evidential chains.

- ‘**proto-user-illusion**’: onset of contact-/tactile- sentience in the circuits that mediate the “resonant loop between body states and brain states” – e.g. those serving fingers, lips and body surfaces – providing an ‘ontologically underwriting/grounding’, at least while those loops are not inhibited by sleep or adaptation.
If true . . .

Electromagnetic signs would correlate with brain areas associated with:

- newborns learning spatial relationships between surfaces of their body
- learning the visual appearance of objects within arms-length;
- and later – extrapolating their grounding – to distant objects.

The insula is a common nexus transited by somatosensory loops – for pressure, pain, and warmth – into which ‘ontological grounding’ and sentience might be further propagated.