

Shawn Prest

PERSONAL INFORMATION

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PROFILE

PhD candidate in Philosophy at Monash University. Passionate about understanding consciousness and the mind. Interested in computational theories of the brain and mind such as predictive processing and active inference and their relationship with phenomenal experience. Adept meditation practitioner with well-honed phenomenological skills.

EDUCATION

19/12/2022 - Present – **Monash University – Monash Centre for Consciousness and Contemplative Studies**

PhD candidate in Philosophy researching active inference and meditation

Primary Supervisor: Prof. Jakob Hohwy (Monash)

Secondary Supervisor: Prof. Craig Hassed (Monash)

External Supervisor: Prof. Monima Chadha (Oxford)

05/10/2020 - 01/11/2021 – **National University of Distance Education (UNED, Spain) – MA**

Master of Theoretical and Practical Philosophy, Specialisation in Logic, History and Philosophy of Science

Final Grade: 9.6/10

Thesis: *Opening the Sensory Gates: A Predictive Processing Account of Meditation and Learning*

Supervisor: Javier González de Prado

04/09/2023 - 09/09/2023 – **Computational Psychiatry Course (CPC) – Translational Neuromodelling Unit (TNU), Zurich.**

18/02/2022 - 24/02/2023 – **DeepLearning.AI (Coursera) – Deep Learning specialisation.** Notable Instructor: Andrew Ng, adjunct professor at Stanford University.

Courses: Neural Networks and Deep Learning (completed 28/03/2022 with certificate); Convolutional Neural Networks (completed 24/02/2023 with certificate).

05/07/2021 - 23/07/2021 – **Neuromatch Academy – Computational Neuroscience**

Three week intensive course on computational neuroscience including theoretical modelling and data-driven analysis (with certificate of completion).

24/01/2012 - 30/06/2015 – **University of Granada – MA**

Keys to the Contemporary World

Thesis: *Building Towards a Post-Carbon Economy*

Supervisors: Antonio Ortega and Alberto Matarán

12/09/2005 - 15/10/2011 – **University of Guelph – BA Honours (4-year) Political Science**

05/09/2000 - 15/06/2004 – **University of Guelph – B.Comp. General (3-year)**

Computer Science

PREPRINTS

Prest, S. & Berryman, K. (2024). *Towards an Active Inference Account of Deep Meditative Deconstruction* (preprint)

IN PROGRESS

Prest, S. (2024). *Modelling meditative deconstruction via 'letting go' and its phenomenology under active inference* (in progress)

Prest, S. (2024). *Understanding affective valence within the active inference framework* (in progress)

TEACHING

July - November 2024 – Teaching Associate. 2nd year unit:
Critical thinking: How to analyse arguments and improve your reasoning skills (ATS2946). Teaching of tutorials and marking. Monash University.

July - November 2024 – Teaching Associate. 2nd and 3rd year unit:
Living a meaningful life: The history, philosophy and practice of contemplative life (ATS2266/ATS3362). Co-teaching of tutorials and marking. Monash University.

July - October 2023 – Teaching Associate. 2nd and 3rd year unit:
Living a meaningful life: The history, philosophy and practice of contemplative life (ATS2266/ATS3362). Marking and assistance during tutorials. Monash University.

PRESENTATIONS

November 2024 – *Modelling meditative deconstruction and its phenomenology under active inference* (Open Talk; Refereed), Australasian Cognitive Neuroscience Society Conference 2024, Newcastle, Australia

November 2024 – *Modelling meditative deconstruction and its phenomenology under active inference* (Poster presentation; Refereed), Maths in the Brain Workshop 2024, Melbourne

October 2024 – *Understanding and Modelling Mechanisms of Meditative Deconstruction under Active Inference* (Presentation; Online), XSCAPE Material Minds group, University of Sussex

September 2024 – *Capacitating Compassion: An active inference account of how meditative deconstruction facilitates compassion* (Presentation; Refereed), Compassion Symposium, University of Queensland, Brisbane

June 2024 – *Towards an Active Inference Account of Deep Meditative Deconstruction* (Poster presentation; Refereed), International Society for Contemplative Research 2024 Conference, Padova, Italy

June 2024 – *Understanding and Modelling Mechanisms of Meditative Deconstruction under Active Inference* (Presentation), Translational Neuromodelling Unit, ETH/UZH, Zurich

December 2023 – *Understanding and Modelling Mechanisms of Meditative Deconstruction under Active Inference* (Presentation; Refereed), Australian Society for Philosophy and Psychology 2023 Conference, Australian National University, Canberra

	October 2023 – <i>Dropping Down: Modelling Meditative Deconstruction and its Phenomenology under Active Inference</i> (Poster selected but not presented; Refereed), Maths in the Brain Workshop 2023, Melbourne. January 2022 – <i>A predictive processing account of altered perception through concentration and insight meditation practice</i> (Presentation; Online), NMN Active Inference and Meditation Group, Nested Minds Network
GRANTS & AWARDS	2024 – Monash Travel Grant 2022 – Awarded the Monash Graduate Scholarship (MGS) 2022 – Awarded the Monash International Tuition Scholarship (MITS)
SKILLS	Technical <u>Programming</u>: Python (including Numpy, Pytorch and Pymdp libraries), Matlab, C, C++ <u>Deep Learning</u>: Building, training and application of fully connected deep neural networks. <u>Web</u>: Wordpress, HTML
LANGUAGES	English – native speaker, Spanish – near-native, French – C1 level
RESEARCH INTERESTS	Consciousness and phenomenal experience, perception, meditation, active inference framework, selfing, affective valence, well-being
RESEARCH RELEVANT EXPERIENCE	• Thorough theoretical and philosophical understanding of Bayesian computational-mechanistic approaches to cognition, perception, action and the brain including computational neurophenomenological approaches • Strong understanding of Buddhist theoretical and psychological frameworks as well as taxonomies • Computational modelling (active inference framework) using variational Bayesian inference methods. Specification and development of in-silico generative models for synthetic agents, task design, implementation and simulation • Excellent grasp on the major perspectives and debates in the philosophy of cognitive science • Highly developed phenomenological investigative skills • Experience managing collaborative theoretical research • Rigorous and precise conceptual analysis and synthesis capacities • Excellent written and verbal communication skills
WORK EXPERIENCE	01/01/2016 - 01/08/2022 – Freelance Translator – Based out of Granada, Spain Collaboration with the agencies TradOnline Spain, Treeloc, RapTrad Imagine, TradOnline Ireland/UK, Localsoft, BCB, InPuzzle, LocTeam, Seprotect, Sublimages (subtitle translation) and ITC France. Duties included translation, proofreading, post-editing and transcribing work from a wide-range of areas including: tourism, technical mechanical documentation, marketing, subtitles, video games, contracts, accounting,

CVs, corporate correspondence, user manuals, call for bids documentation, product catalogues, academic journal articles, website localisation, etc.

01/02/2016 - 01/24/2018 – **Translation Service Contractor** – TradOnline Spain, Granada

Translation from Spanish and French to English, including extensive translation of academic, web/IT, marketing, business, culinary, cultural and tourism texts for major domestic and international clients.

Proofreading of translations into English. Translation quality control, responsible for evaluating the work of other translators. Extensive use of MemoQ, SDL Trados. IT support work for the company.

01/02/2016 - 01/10/2016 – **Translation Service Contractor** – TradOnline France

Translation from French to English and Spanish to English for major domestic and international clients.

PHENOMENO- LOGICAL TRAINING & INVESTIGATION

Profile: Daily meditation practitioner since January 2016. Over 2300 hours of formal practice, including nineteen intensive silent retreats since November 2018 totalling 124 days and three training courses. Majority of time dedicated to deconstruction (insight) techniques with emphasis on phenomenal invariants of experience.

Courses:

September 2021 - November 2021

See Hear Feel Master Class self-paced course with Unified Mindfulness (Shinzen Young).

March 2020 - June 2020

Responsive Meditation Training with Vince Horn at Buddhist Geeks (Online) – 10 90-minute weekly sessions.

Autumn 2018

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course with Carmen Verdejo at Presentia (Granada, Spain) – 33 hours over 9 sessions.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

October 2024 - Present

Australasian Cognitive Neuroscience Society – Member