



## Second Workshop of Contemplative Phenomenology The Phenomenological Epochè as Practice, and the Practice of Meditation

**Michel Bitbol**, Director of Research at CNRS, led the second workshop of the Mind & Life Europe **Initiative of Contemplative Phenomenology (ICP)** and summarizes the experience as follows:

*"At first, we thought we knew what this second workshop of the Initiative of Contemplative Phenomenology was about. The "Epochè", the suspension of ordinary beliefs, the "putting out of play" of any judgment towards what there is, the "depriving of acceptance" (but also the depriving of refusal) of the thesis that the world exists independently of us. We also thought we knew that the Epochè is both a tool that promotes a contemplative attitude, and a mirror image of the inner gestures that are performed during the meditation. In that case, our task would have been simple: examining the analogy between a phenomenological and a contemplative experience by means of the microphenomenological interview technique.*

*But it turned out our domain of study is uncertain, not to say undefined. Phenomenologists do not agree about what an Epochè is, and they have no detailed method to achieve it. Contemplatives think they recognize something of their practice when being exposed to the phenomenological concept of "epochè" (letting go, suspend conceptual superimpositions etc.). But is this more than an appealing analogy ?*

*So, we were suddenly projected in a remarkably creative process. Cooking raw philosophical concepts in a contemplative pan, and conversely enhancing the contemplative by becoming aware of its steps. Phenomenology, meditation, and qualitative interviews are buttressing each other.*

*We give instructions to make experiences in the wake of what we believe to be the epochè, and in the atmosphere of a meditative suspension. Then, the microphenomenological interview reveals unexpected inner gestures connected to this. In the process, we revise our beliefs, definitions, and practices. We find ourselves doing experimental philosophy and having philosophical experiences. And we are making stunning discoveries, refining distinctions, and transforming ourselves in the process of intense research, interaction, and friendship.*

*We could hardly hope for more wonder..."*