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MEMORY, REALITY, AND ETHNOGRAPHY IN A COLOMBIAN WAR  
ZONE: TOWARDS A SOCIAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF COLLECTIVE  
REMEMBRANCE

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This paper considers phenomenology as a philosophical framework from which to understand the moral experience of collective memory. As a philosophical approach to human reality, phenomenology contributes insight into the connection between the experiential grounding of collective memory and the reality of the social world. The inspiration for exploring these connections is related to my ongoing ethnographic fieldwork in Colombia, South America, which began in 2007 and continues to the present. As part of this research, I have had extended visits to Afrodescendent rainforest peasant river communities in the Cacarica, Jiguaminando, and Curvarado river basin areas of the Atrato River on the northwestern region of Pacific coast, near the Colombia-Panama border. In 1997, the paramilitaries and government forces violently displaced these communities. Since the time of their forced removal, members of these communities, in an act of civil resistance, have returned and reclaimed their collectively titled ancestral territories now encompassed in the war zone. They have returned to their territories, declaring their land as humanitarian zones that are accompanied and protected by the *Comision Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz*, the *Inter-American Court of Human Rights* (IACHR), and the *United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* (UNHCHR).

During the five years that I have visited these communities, I have struggled with the question of whether or not ethnographic studies can illuminate the violent realities of other people's lives and experiences. I continue to search for a phenomenological framework from which to write a "realist" ethnography, an ethnography that stays "true" to the experiences to the realities of violence told to me by people living through and with daily violence. These violent realities encompass the destruction of life as well as how victims of violence struggle to reconstitute a moral life out of the circumstances that attempt to diminish their lives. But what motivated me to want to search phenomenologically for a 'realist' understanding of human reality?

Upon my return from visiting with Afrodescendent peasant river communities in the humanitarian zone, I had a happenstance exchange with an American at a restaurant in the capital city of Bogotá in Colombia. This person was a college-educated European-American man in his late thirties who was curious about why an African-American like myself was in Colombia. I told

him that I was in Colombia to visit with and collect testimonies from Afrodescendent communities that are the victims of state violence and forced removal from their ancestral territories. He curtly retorted that their testimonies as victims of violence are stories and as such are “social constructions,” built or constructed out of words and language. For him, it was not possible to experience violence outside of linguistically or “socially constructed” meanings of that experience. He explained to me that because meanings are “linguistically” constructed the testimonies told are fluid, in flux, instable. At which point, he also claimed that since experiences are linguistically constructed, experiences therefore could never be “real.” I understood him to mean that “violent experiences” are not “real” outside of language. Furthermore, because of the instability of language, violence is experienced as fleeting and transitory, and therefore unreliable as truth claims. His perspective suggested that, being that there can be no certainty about whether violence is actually experienced as such, or in his words, “how do they know that they are really experiencing violence and not something else, *isn't it just their interpretation? Aren't they just experiencing their or some else's interpretation of a violent situation?*” As we continued with the exchange it was evident that he wanted to disentangle the “experience” of violence from the “real.” He expressed skepticism about any “realist” assertion about experience, especially violent experiences. I took this interlocutor’s skepticism to be a diminishment and trivialization of the reality of the violent experiences lived by other people. I perceived this diminishment to fundamentally mean that forcibly removed Afrodescendent peasants had no claim to a moral reality. In other words, they had no claim from which to want to reconstitute themselves as a moral community.

One aspect of the violent reality experienced by these communities can be understood in terms of their attempt to forge a moral community in the humanitarian zones. A substantive issue raised by teachers, community leaders, and youth centers around the idea that their eco-ethno-education initiative is a restorative act of (moral) remembrance dedicated to recovering and sustaining the obligatory integrity of their ancestral territorial communities and cultural traditions across generations. Their act of moral remembrance involves an intergenerational memory in which there is an obligation to fuse past, present and future generations into a community. It is an act of moral remembrance dedicated to recovering and sustaining a particular way of belonging and relating to the dead, the living, and the land (plants and animals) that preceded violent displacement.

The purpose of this paper is not to present an ethnographic analysis of the intergenerational memory of these violently displaced communities in Colombia. Rather, its purpose is to propose a phenomenological framework from which to understand the moral reality and intergenerational obligations of collective remembrance. Such an understanding might contribute later to ethnographic writing that is attentive to the “realness” or “reality” of

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intergenerational memory as a moral act of recovery and reconstitution. It is in this regard that this paper explicates three Husserlian approaches to phenomenology: static, genetic, and generative. In contrast to static and genetic phenomenology, the paper concludes that generative phenomenology provides a more appropriate framework for explicating the moral experience and reality of collective memory in the social world of violently displaced Afrodescendent peasant river communities.

#### STATIC PHENOMENOLOGY

My general consideration of phenomenology is motivated from wanting to understand the moral reality of collective memory as experienced in the social world of displaced Afro-Colombians. Towards this end, I turn first to Edmund Husserl, the founder of modern phenomenology. Like other scholars in the humanities, social sciences, and education, I want to extend Husserl's insights regarding how human worlds are constituted as "real" and as meaningful human experiences. Husserlian phenomenology provides a theoretical pathway into understanding how human experiences come into existence as real through human modes of perceiving the world through judging, willing, valuing, thinking, imagining, feeling, and remembering.

One could say that my interest in Husserlian phenomenology is motivated by the argument that there is an objective world that is really "out there." However, a Husserlian approach argues that as experiencing subjects we can only perceive and feel the world in a very limited sense. For the objective world is infinite and contains more than what we can receive or perceive. Our perceptions are always a reduction, a simplification, or narrowing of an infinite reality. As experiencing subjects we put the world between brackets and exclude the world from our field of perception, presenting instead the world as remembered, judged, thought, willed, valued. Static phenomenology was Husserl's first attempt to analyze how we perceive and experience the world. However, a limitation of static phenomenology is that it is overly formal and restrictive in its conceptualization of human perception. I am in agreement with Janet Donohoe and others who argue that Edmund Husserl's formulation of genetic phenomenology is a response to the limitations and is a revision of his earlier static phenomenology.<sup>1</sup>

To begin, static phenomenology strives for an understanding of the general structure of consciousness, as it perceives the world through the objects it establishes as given. Static analysis scrutinizes how an object in the world is given or made present to us through our perceptions. It is concerned with how an object is experienced to appear to us as real. In a static analysis, the object would have to be "purged" of all acts intending *spatial-temporal existence*; it

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<sup>1</sup> Janet Donohoe, *Husserl on Ethics and Intersubjectivity: From Static to Genetic Phenomenology* (New York: Humanity Press, 2004), 24-30.

would have to be abstracted from its “world” and be experienced purely through perception.

Subsequently the focus of static phenomenology is not on whether the object exists, but rather how the experience of the object is directly related to the subject’s different modes of perception. Hence, experiencing the object is dependent upon the particular perspective through which it is perceived. This suggests too that the object’s many appearances are dependent upon my relationship to it. So even if my angle of vision changes in relation to the object, the object remains stable and unchanging in its givenness to me. What changes is not the “givenness” of the object, but the manifold standpoints through which the object is perceived as given. And, it is in the unity of these manifold perspectives that the object’s presence or givenness is constituted for me as such. For example, to perceive through sight the cube shaped object on my desk from its front side is to anticipate that it has a backside as well as, right and left sides, and a top and bottom. In static phenomenology, sense or meaning is restricted to being experienced through the formal structure of perceiving the object from its different sides.

A problem of static phenomenology is its synchronic approach to understanding how an object is perceived. That approach fixes the perception of the object and how it is experienced, as well as the origins of the object’s meaning, to one point in time—which is the present. In doing so, static phenomenology is restrictive because it is unable to diachronically analyze the object’s meaning in relation to its historical constitution. Static phenomenology’s formal structure of perceiving and its fixation on the present does not allow consideration of how the object’s background constitutes our immediate perception and experience of the object. Regarding the limitations of a static analysis, Donohoe says that

without an explanation of the origins of meaning and the origins of habits and convictions of the ego, we are unable to provide an adequate explanation of the sense of the object itself. The sense we give to an object can invoke a different history purely due to the content of the constitutive act. The act as seen statically cannot account for the different histories of the contents of act.

Donohoe concludes, “Husserl’s formal structure does not allow for the historical development of the *noematic* content.”<sup>2</sup> Briefly, the noematic content is the object that is experienced and constituted by the perceiving subject. Meaning, the constitution of the perceived object is dependent on the experience of the perceiving subject. The problem with this formal structure of

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 28.

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constitution is that “it neglects the role and importance of a much broader awareness that is present in every perception.”<sup>3</sup> As Donohoe notes,

Each perception presupposes a background to the perceived object that necessarily plays a role in the motivation of the sense-giving activity. In other words, a subject does not see isolated objects: he or she sees objects within a context that motivates a particular understanding of the meaning of the object.<sup>4</sup>

These same limitations are found in Husserl’s early static analysis of time consciousness, in which time is considered only in regard to its form. Consequently, the remembered object is experienced through different anticipated successions of perception: an original “now-perception,” “just-past-now-perception,” “just-just-now-perception” and so on. In other words, each actual now perception is continuously replaced by succeeding now-perceptions involving various modified degrees of givenness as it recedes into the past. This introduces the question of how static phenomenology understands the relationship between memory and time consciousness.

For Husserl, the remembered object is perceived through the temporal structure or form of time consciousness. In this regard, Husserl’s static analysis distinguishes between “primary memory” and “secondary memory.” Primary memory is experienced as an extension of the original now perception that involves a change in temporal character, but not a re-production of what was originally given. Secondary memory, on the other hand, is the re-production of the original now-perception in the present and can be continuously repeated. Secondary memory is not the same as the original now-perception, but is a recreation of the remembered object in the present by the subject. Husserl’s static analysis of time consciousness is restricted to its form. Thus, the genesis (context) that motivates the particular understanding of remembering subjects to the meaning of temporal objects (e.g., past, present, and future)—as well as earlier experiences of those objects—are explained. Insofar that remembering is structured through discrete temporal modes of perceiving, the genesis of remembering and experiencing the past, present, and future becomes narrowed and closed.

Static phenomenology describes the ideal forms structuring the act of remembering and its perception and establishment of remembered objects as given and real. Static phenomenology presupposes an already fully developed ego because it purges the ego from its social world by peeling away layers of meaning that reveal the ego’s temporal-spatial horizons. Thus, it deals with the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

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ego's consciousness as an abstract unity.<sup>5</sup> The result is that static phenomenology is unable to uncover a deeper level of temporal horizons of historical development, where a connection between ego and a world and the ego and others, or a level of intersubjectivity, can be revealed. For this reason Husserl turns to formulating a genetic phenomenology, which I initially suggest is more suitable for understanding the intersubjective establishment of collective memory as a social reality. Before I address this, I will first distinguish collective memory from cultural memory.

#### COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND CULTURAL MEMORY

Although "collective memory" and "cultural memory" have a close connection, the two approaches have somewhat disparate objects of analysis. Methodologically memory is studied as an object and process bound to culture, and culture is reduced to language and discourse. The cultural memory approach specifically offers a textual analysis of how objects and figures of the past get discursively represented (or constructed) as memory. Memory is scrutinized as texts. It is analyzed in relation to how cultural objects, places, and figures, through language and discourse, are made into objects of memory. It is in this context that the cultural memory approach analyzes how social groups construct group identities by discursively constructing objects and figures with memorial significance.

So, while the cultural memory approach makes a contribution to the study of collective memory, its limitation is that it fails to take into account the intersubjective establishment of the experience of memory as real. In doing so, it falls short in analyzing the reality or realness of memory in relation to the collective. I am arguing that memory is established through our real life attachments and ties to others. Put a little differently, because memory is intersubjectively constituted, it is experienced as real. Consequently, the problem with the social constructivist perspective of cultural memory is that its representation of the cultural object as memory abstracts the object from its lived-context of meaning, making that object a fetish. What is overlooked is the way in which the cultural object or figure of memory is intersubjectively experienced. Thus, what is neglected is the way in which remembrance of the past is constituted as a reality by the social collective in its establishment of bonds of solidarity. It is with the establishment of social ties of solidarity that the cultural object or figure "comes into presence" as "real" and is given commemorative significance for the social group. Memory therefore is created and experienced collectively with others as real. For this reason, I turn to Edward Tiryakian who argues that Emile Durkheim employs the term "social fact" to reference this sense of the real and its establishment. Tiryakian interprets Durkheim's "social fact" as a phenomenological framework from which to understand how reality is established through the creation of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 28-30.

collective sentiment. I extend Tiryakian's interpretation below to explore how group sentiment establishes the cultural objects (i.e., material and non-material) of memory with a sense of the real.

#### DURKHEIM'S SOCIAL SOLIDARITY AND GENETIC PHENOMENOLOGY

While Durkheim did not write explicitly about collective memory, his thoughts about the social ties of solidarity are relevant for a phenomenological understanding of the moral significance of collective memory in the life-world of internally displaced Afro-Colombian communities. Some contemporary phenomenological sociologists argue that Durkheim's methodological approach to the study of "social reality" has an affinity with Husserl's phenomenology. Tiryakian maintains that Durkheim's positivism has been misconstrued, owing to his famous "methodological dictum 'to consider social facts as things.'" Tiryakian writes:

Taken out of context, this statement might appear to make Durkheim antithetical to an existential-phenomenological viewpoint, but such a conclusion is unwarranted. On the contrary, "consider social facts as things" has for Durkheim the same import and meaning as Husserl's dictum "to the things themselves." For Husserl, valid phenomenological knowledge can only be obtained by an initial reduction for the "natural attitude," by bracketing the judgments about reality. . . . This phenomenological precept is exactly the counterpart of Durkheim's sociological rule!<sup>6</sup>

Durkheim bracketed judgments about reality that were the "causal framework within which the positivism of the physical sciences operated."<sup>7</sup> According to Tiryakian, "Durkheim's sociological analysis is an implicitly phenomenological approach [because] the richness of its *radical description* [elucidates] the interdependence of social phenomena rather than [demonstrating the] causal principles operative in society."<sup>8</sup> Thus, for Tiryakian, "Durkheim's positivism is grounded in accepting social facts as *sui generis* phenomena of intersubjective consciousness, as products of social interaction" and not of the causal relations of the natural world.<sup>9</sup> For Durkheim, a social fact of the group or collective is a set of obligatory relations that bind individuals to that group; he takes these binding relations of obligation to be the essential features and characteristics (*edios*) of the intersubjectivity of social groups. In this way, group intersubjectivity is constitutive of social ties of

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<sup>6</sup>Edward A. Tiryakian, "Existential Phenomenology and the Sociological Tradition," *American Sociological Review* 30, no. 5 (1965): 680.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

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solidarity. This means that social facts manifest and are experienced as the external constraints that the bonds of solidarity exercises on the individual with his or her social collective. In the words of Durkheim:

A social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations.<sup>10</sup>

In “On Phenomenological Sociology,”<sup>11</sup> James Heap and Phillip Roth strongly disagree with Tiryakian’s characterization of Durkheim’s sociological analysis as a phenomenological approach. Their complaint is that Tiryakian misunderstands Husserl’s concept of reduction as operating in the empirical realm (i.e., level of the social). Heap and Roth assert that by “accepting social facts as *sui generis* phenomena of intersubjective consciousness, as products of social interaction,”<sup>12</sup> Tiryakian erroneously assumes that the empirical realm (e.g., Durkheim’s “social facts”) can be reduced to their underlying characteristics—to the external constraints experienced by the individual within the social collective. In contrast, Heap and Roth maintain that Husserl’s phenomenological reduction “treats intended objects or intentional acts within the *a priori* realm of possibilities.”<sup>13</sup> They go on further to say that, “in this realm, through a method of imaginative variation, the phenomenologist can freely vary the objects or acts of consciousness.”<sup>14</sup> The phenomenologist does so to “discover what is *a priori*, i.e., essential to every possible appearance of the object or act within the empirical world, the realm of actualities.” So, then, for the phenomenologist to “secure the *a priori* realm the empirical world must be bracketed.” In response to this bracketing, referred to also as “phenomenological reduction,” Heap and Roth declare the incompatibility between sociology and phenomenology, concluding: “No sociologist brackets the existence of the world. Sociology’s interests, problems, and solutions are not to be found in the realm of possibilities.”<sup>15</sup>

Hence, skeptical of “phenomenological sociology” Heap and Roth point to another closely related problem, which is what Tiryakian mistakenly assumes to be an affinity between Durkheim’s dictum, “consider social facts as

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<sup>10</sup> Emile Durkheim, *Rules of the Sociological Method* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 8.

<sup>11</sup> James L. Heap and Phillip A. Roth, “On Phenomenological Sociology,” *American Sociological Review* 30, no. 3 (1973): 354-367

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 356. Heap and Phillip reference to “realm of possibilities” assumes that Tiryakian is working out of Husserl’s static phenomenological perspective. See above section on static phenomenology.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

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things,” and Husserl’s “to the things themselves.”<sup>16</sup> They indicate that the source of this mistake is that Tiryakian misunderstands Husserl’s concept of phenomena. What Husserl meant by “to the things themselves” was a return to phenomena as given in immediate consciousness. By phenomena, says Heap and Roth, Husserl meant that ““which having been subjected to the phenomenological reduction, is purified from reality.”<sup>17</sup> In addition, “a phenomena qua phenomena only becomes available when we cease to treat an object as real, and begin to treat the object as meant, as intended, as it appears.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, in accordance with Husserl’s concept of phenomena, Heap and Roth conclude that Durkheim’s social facts “are hardly phenomena, for they are theoretic abstractions from what is given in experience within the empirical realm. They are not ‘*prior to all*’ “theory,” . . . They are not arrived at through phenomenological reduction.”<sup>19</sup>

This argument by Heap and Roth that “things” (e.g., Durkheim’s social facts) within the realm of the social world are not phenomena because they cannot be arrived at through phenomenological reduction raises questions about the use of phenomenology to explicate the social (moral) world of the social reality of collective memory. According to Heap and Roth, a phenomenological analysis should not presume that the “moral facts” of the social world can be properly regarded as phenomena (contrary to Tiryakian’s interpretation of Durkheim’s dictum). In other words, phenomenological analysis must not take-for-granted as phenomena the social (moral) facts—i.e., the external constraints of obligatory relationships, which constitute or make-up a group’s collective memory and sense of the real. Thus, the moral phenomena (or moral facts) experienced by internally displaced Afro-Colombian communities, within the realm of their collective memory’s social world, are not appropriate objects for phenomenological inquiry, according to Heap and Roth.

The shortcoming of Heap and Roth’s criticism of “phenomenological sociology” is that it is premised on a static phenomenological analysis. They are unaware of Husserl’s revision of static phenomenology as genetic phenomenology to remedy the fixation of static analysis on how the sense or meaning of objects is prearranged by different modes of perception.<sup>20</sup> In Heap and Roth’s static analysis, they overstate the exclusivity of the social world in the phenomenological reduction. Their overstatement leads them to assume that for Husserl, the independent existence of consciousness means that because human perception is the absolute foundation of being or world, being or world was altogether excluded from his analysis of the ego. While Husserl may have

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> See above section on static phenomenology.

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inadvertently contributed to Heap and Roth's overstatement, Husserl's claim that the ego's perception is the absolute founding ground of the "being-sense of the world" should not be taken to mean that Husserl did not assume the presence of the world as an object of meaning for consciousness or perception. So even if in its phenomenological reduction, static analysis is opposed to positing a reality, a reality continues to always be presupposed. Recognizing this Husserl begins to address more explicitly the significance of the "world" in the ego's founding. It is in terms of genetic phenomenology, and in contrast to static phenomenology, that Husserl puts forth a co-founding relationship between the "being-sense" or meaning of the world and the ego.

In putting forth this co-founding relationship, John Steinbock points out that "rather than simply fixing on what objects are, real or possible [i.e., static phenomenology], Husserl turns toward the way in which objects are given, and ultimately toward the way in which the world as a whole is given."<sup>21</sup> Thus, in terms of genetic analysis "constitution" is an "account of how objects in the world and the world itself take on sense."<sup>22</sup> Here, the concern of genetic constitution "is not with how objects in the world or the world itself get accepted as real,"<sup>23</sup> in other words, the concern is not with how the ego secures objectivity but with how it understands objectivity and the world as real.<sup>24</sup> It is in this context that Durkheim's moral or social facts—the external constraints of obligatory relations that bind individuals to the social collective—appear relevant for a social phenomenology of collective remembrance.

#### COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND GENERATIVE PHENOMENOLOGY

If we provisionally accept Durkheim's "social facts," particularly in light of a genetic constitution of the objectivity of real,<sup>25</sup> the question that remains is how does genetic phenomenology account for the ego's coming into presence in relation to its sense of the world's objectivity. Genetic phenomenology accounts for the individual ego by demonstrating the ego's historical development as an ego within the context of its individual life-world. That life-world is sense-constituting because it is formative, sedimented history of the ego's previous experiences. Thus, the objects that genetic phenomenology is concerned with are those that give themselves to the ego from within its sedimented history. Here the ego's conscious acts are also posited within the ego's sense-constituting life-world. Which means that for objects and the conscious acts of the ego to be posited within the background of the ego's previous experiences, they must have bestowed upon them a sense of

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<sup>21</sup> John Steinbock, *Home and Beyond: Generative Phenomenology after Husserl* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995): 336.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> The "objectivity of the real" is equivalent to Durkheim's social facts.

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the real. In genetic phenomenology, the ego's previous experiences are analyzed in terms of the ego's historical development; therefore, the horizons of the ego's life-world are considered historical horizons. In the case of genetic analysis, temporality is understood as an essential feature and characteristic of the life-world's sense-constituting ego activity.

According to Steinbock,<sup>26</sup> genetic phenomenology starts with the genesis of the "concrete" ego and temporally traces the becoming of the ego into a self. It traces the transition of the ego that passively perceives and its fulfillment at the "judicative" level as an active egoic rationality that achieves and establishes a unique individual biography. Genetic analysis explicates the self-temporalization of the ego; that is to say, it analyzes the concrete ego as a process of becoming in which its present experiences point back to previous ones, presupposing the ego to experience a future that is "typical" and "familiar." This means that in a genetic analysis of memory, the past is solely analyzed in terms of its meaning for the ego's constitution into a unique individual in the present. The present is the reference point for understanding the past, which means also that the temporalization of the ego into a self is analyzed synchronically, that is, only within the intersubjective reality of its contemporaries.

The limitation of the genetic approach is that it rests within the confines of egological constitution, *self*-temporalization, and individual facticity, such that the sphere of intersubjectivity extends only to the ego as it exists at a certain point in time without considering its generative historical development. In other words, the intersubjective context of egological constitution, self-temporalization, and biography or facticity is only analyzed in terms of a synchronic field of contemporaries. As phenomena, memory is restricted to the *givenness* of the present, and the past is inquired into only as a moment from which to reflect back in time so as to ascertain the processes involved in the ego's fulfillment and experience of individuality.

On the other hand, a generative phenomenology treats the process of becoming as a process of generation, and this is a process that occurs over the generations as a socio-geo-historical movement.<sup>27</sup> The concern is with analyzing the historical-teleological-normative dimension of the life-world. In Husserl's later writings, such as *The Crisis*,<sup>28</sup> he broaches a generative phenomenology in which the life-world is not characterized as phenomenon, or described as a "world-phenomenon," as in his earlier writings, but as horizon. As phenomenon, the life-world is posited as "given," rendering the world as a

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<sup>26</sup> Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1970).

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singular or unified object. Elaborating further, Steinbock identifies problems with Husserl's early life-world ontology. He writes:

What I take issue with... is his [Husserl's] tacit assumption that the world can function like an objective sense and thus can be clarified like a thing or object. He does this because he conflates the function of an objective sense with the function of a horizon, namely, the process of pointing beyond and guiding perceptions. Of course, neither the objective sense nor a horizon are things or objects. But when Husserl characterizes the world as an objective sense rather than horizon, he slips, as it were, and tends to treat the world on the model of an object. That is, the analysis . . . by which Husserl examines the world . . . elucidates an object as object. Hence, in order for the world as a universe of things to be no longer presupposed it is converted into a "phenomenon." The world itself becomes the "One" world.<sup>29</sup>

In Steinbock's view, Husserl's early writings reduce the world to a totality, to "One" world,<sup>30</sup> suggesting "no possibility of a world encountering a radical different world."<sup>31</sup> For example, the world of contemporaries is perceived as given, as a unified world and therefore as complete. This also means there are no horizons that separate the contemporaries' world from that of the ancestors. According to Steinbock, the "homeworld" of the contemporaries never encounter the "alienworlds" of the ancestors and successors as separate and distinct. This occurs because the alienworlds of the ancestors and successors are reduced to the present or given perceptions, experiences, and meanings of the contemporaries.<sup>32</sup> The alienworlds of the ancestors and successors are not perceived as a condition for experiencing the homeworld of the contemporaries.

Alternatively, in *The Crisis* the life-world is described in two modalities, as "horizon" and as "ground." At this point, according to Steinbock, Husserl departs from the transcendental considerations of life-world ontology, in which the investigative concern is with *what* the world is, with describing its particular *modes of givenness*. This concern is in contrast to generative analysis in which the concern with the life-world as horizon is with its *modes of pregiveness*, and therefore the life-world as a condition of the appearance or experience of things. That is, the pregiveness of the world-as-horizon is constitutive of the sense or meaning of things that are given. Put differently, the givenness of a world presently given is always presupposed by a world that is

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<sup>29</sup> Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*, 101.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-184.

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pregiven. Which means, horizon is a way or mode of revealing things; it is a feature of the process of how something comes into being or is constituted as present. The life-world as horizon delimits or sets the limits of possibilities for how a subject and its interactions are revealed, made relevant, and thus constituted in terms of sense or meaning.

This means that the obligatory relations constitutive of a group's collective memory are pre-given by that group's previous life-world of ancestors. Steinbock elaborates this notion of "community of generations," writing,

Generative world constitution extends before me and after me, before us and after us in a community of generations. As a constituting subjectivity, I am co-constituting and co-constituted as being born into and dying out of an historical normatively significant world. Thus, the problem of generative sense constitution will also have to investigate how an individual can acquire a tradition as his or her own.<sup>33</sup>

#### CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS A SOCIAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF COLLECTIVE REMEMBRANCE

The previous discussion suggests that a generative phenomenology allows collective memory to be understood within a "community of generations." A generative phenomenology therefore lends itself to our understanding collective memory. Returning to my initial concern with the recuperative memory practices of violated Afrodescendent peasant river communities, a generative phenomenology seems best suited to understanding of memory in relation to a "co-living present-world with past and future horizons." This perspective also orients my ethnographic writing to be attentive to how the experience of collective memory is constitutive in terms of constituting or enacting the generative world of these communities. The collective experience of memory, and its establishment of bonds of solidarity make real the moral reality of their "community of generations."

In the opening section of this paper I introduced a college-educated European-American man that I by happenstance met in Colombia. This individual believed that it was not possible for displaced Afrodescendent Colombian communities to experience violence outside of linguistically constructed meanings of that experience. In his words, "*How do they know that they are really experiencing violence and not something else, isn't it just their interpretation? Aren't they just experiencing their or some else's interpretation of a violent situation?*" The social constructivist viewpoint of the interlocutor suggests claims about the construction of the social world—that it is epiphenomena or an effect of language or discourse. The problem with this

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 190.

perspective is that it has no theory of the social, no theory of what, how, and why a social world is established or constituted. In this regard, Durkheim's "social facts" provides insight into how the "social" is intersubjectively constituted through obligatory relations of solidarity that bind individuals to a group or collective. The constraints of these relations, and the feelings of solidarity they provoke, make it such that individuals experience the group or collective as real, as a social reality. Husserlian phenomenology is relevant here because it is a philosophy of the social and of intersubjectivity. It understands that human consciousness is formed in the dynamic interplay of self, other, and world, and therefore is inherently intersubjective. Generative phenomenology provides a framework from which to ethnographically explore the intersubjective significance of the obligatory relations and feelings of solidarity that violently displaced rural Afrodescendent communities have towards past and future generations, the land, plants and animals, the dead and living, and (finally) themselves. Obligations passed down by their ancestors are collectively remembered and lived daily in the present. Again, it is these obligations that establish a social world and experiences of their world as real. Violence, then, should not be reduced to discourse, but should be fundamentally understood as an intersubjective relationship that diminishes the reality of the social world daily experienced by these communities.

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