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Sound hyletic.

Themes for an aesthesiology of *hyle*

Abstract

The notion of hyle seems problematic for a phenomenological foundation of experience. For this very reason, its completed invalidity was generally postulated. At the same time, there are many reflections in Husserlian writings that help us understand it better. This paper attempts to show how hyletic experience, by existing in the lived body, triggers in parallel rhythmic, vibrating, and sonorous experiences as bodily experiences. Sounds are experienced by the body before any reflections or conscious experiences of them. In this way, the aporetic instance of hyletic data finds a proposal of resolution in the fundamental corporeal experience of sound.

Keywords

Hyle, Phenomenology of sound, Husserl

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Introduction

To delineate a hyletic aesthesiology, we should deal with a set of tracks that fundamentally define the phenomenological method.

From the unavoidable relationship between the hyletic component and the exercise of the *epoché* to the fact that the direct vision of hyletic data is simply impossible, the field of hyletic manifestation narrows. The phenomenological analysis shows that, at the heart of sensible experiences, there are hyletic data that manifest themselves through corporeality. In this regard, every root of sonorous, tactile, and visive sensibility finds a hyletic fundament in the analytic contest of phenomenological genesis. On this basis, a *hyletic sound* exists. We might therefore ask about the existence of a *sound hyletic* – something inasmuch as sound is experienceable.

Sound experience is typically a bodily experience; it involves touch, modifies the body structure, and it is all-pervasive. If the thematization of hyletic data engages the *Leib*, then a form of hyletic experience present in the sound experience is inextricably intertwined with the body, where the hyletic component emerges as a fundamental stratum brought to evidence.

Afterwards, we will analyze the concept of *hyle* in the Husserlian phenomenology (1), inquire about its strong relationship with corporeality (2), and conclude with a section on the existence of a sound hyletic (3).

1. The hyletic shadow of feeling

The concept of *hyle* is one of the most controversial, obscure topics of Husserlian phenomenology. What is presented in *Ideen* as a real component of *Erlebnis* – without, however, being limited to this – ends up in the shadow of the transcendental *ego*. The *hyle* does not leave the phenomenological course; it is perpetually present in Husserlian thinking even when it is overshadowed by something else.

The term *hyle* clearly derives from Aristotle, and it specifically designates the *matter*. In Greek, it signifies both the matter and the matter used for construction (i.e., something tangible and included in practical projects) as well as, the forest and its own matter, namely the wood. When Husserl starts to delineate the morphology of the intentional lived-process (*Erlebnis*), he recurs precisely to an Aristotelian terminolo-

gy: *hyle* and *morphé* (Husserl 1976: § 85). This distinction is not without relevance as the analytical dichotomy moves in the direction of a framework of the constitution. Recalling what is defined as “primary contents” (*primäre Inhalte*) in *Logische Untersuchungen*, Husserl specifies in *Ideen I* how certain sensuous *Erlebnisse* belong to them, i.e., the “sensation-contents” (*Empfindungsinhalte*). These can be color-data, touch-data and tone-data, which we shall no longer confuse with the appearing moments of physical things, namely the coloredness, roughness, etc. (Husserl 1983: 203). Instead, they are what is presented *through* the sensation contents from the *Erlebnis* point of view. Above these sensorial moments, there is a stratum which animates them (*beeelende*) and which bestows sense to them. Therefore, there is a formal pole “by which precisely the concrete intensive mental process [*konkrete intentionale Erlebnis*] arises from the *sensuous, which has in itself nothing pertaining to intentionality*” (*ibid.*). To this formal component are owed the activities of consciousness, which deal with a properly material component that involves the non-intentional part of the process. “In other words, although intentionality alone constitutes meaning and objects, sensations also have a role in determining their constitution, even though this role is a passive one, the role of a ‘raw material’ out of which the objective is formed” (Sokolowski 1970: 56).

Beyond the possibility of a Husserlian hylomorphism, the hyletic fundament represents something which consciousness is not directly aware of, but it nevertheless plays a pivotal role in the perception. In this regard, the “stream of phenomenological being” has a “stuff stratum”, whose phenomenological analysis can be termed as *hyletic-phenomenological*, and a noetic stratum, which a *noetic-phenomenological* analysis can be associated to (Husserl 1983: 207).

As Williford points out:

[T]he “stream of phenomenological being” is just the stream of consciousness as “purified” by the phenomenological reduction. The “stuff stratum” is just the layer of hyletic or sensory data. And the “noetic stratum” includes those *acts* of sense or meaning bestowal whereby we animate the sensory data *as* being presentative of some particular transcendent object or state of affairs in some particular way. (Williford 2013: 504)

The distinction between stuff and noetic, which Husserl was well aware of, is only valid at the already constituted level of temporality. In fact, we can isolate the sensory datum from the temporal stream in which it is embedded only for an already constituted temporality. Thus, the anal-

ysis must be genetic and not static, hence it is necessary to start asking through which processes perception takes form, and what makes it legitimate (Costa, Franzini, Spinicci 2002: 172).

The genetic analysis of stream experience is characterized by temporary constitution (Costa 1999: 173). This characterization does not depend on the fact that the central concept of genetic phenomenology is time or association – possible acts of consciousness are constituted through associative syntheses –, but it rather depends on the concept of *habituality*, to be declined in the plural (*Habitualitäten*) (Costa 1999: 44; Husserl 1960, particularly the *IV Meditation* § 32), which constitutes its main points of analysis. Since in the static constitution there are associative referrals, the true novelty of the genetic one is the notion of habituality, i.e., the unavoidability of perceptive education through which, due to the association, the syntheses and the passive genesis, is given an orientation to the field of experience. The temporalization and its relationship with hyletic data emerge in *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis* (Husserl 2001: 54-5) and elsewhere (Husserl 1991; 2001a; 2006), when Husserl returns to the issue of hyletic data by thematizing the consciousness of temporality through, for example, the concept of fusion in the passive constitution. The intentionality, as Husserl reminds us in the *Lectures*, manifests itself through the constitutive relationship of the tripartite temporality, i.e., the essential formulation of the original constitution of time (retention, now and protention). The hyletic dimension is rendered as a mode of sensibility to constitute temporal data in the temporal stream (Martelli 2020: 117-8; Husserl 2001; 2001a).

Within this constitution of temporality, particularly in the structure of a living immanent present (*lebendige immanente Gegenwart*), the most universal genetic phenomenon lives: “a hyletic core” (*hyletischer Kern*) whenever “a unified multiplicity of sensible data (visual data, sound data, etc.) – unified in the most loose manner – is essentially and constantly constituted in simultaneity and living succession” (Husserl 2001: 184). For example, we are sitting in a room when we start hearing a melody that at first leaves us indifferent. The presenting itself of the melody arises from a sensory immanence which takes the functional form of the sensory moment “we hear a melody”. Before this functional form, we cannot talk about a perceptive act as we are not yet aware of the melody and do not pay attention to it. Consciousness lends itself, so to speak, to a *reception* of sensory sound data, reaching the listeners’ ears as already available. However, when such an indifferent melody in the background captures our attention at a certain moment, a particular

sound affects us and we immediately make the melody perceptively present.

We are occupied with something else, and the melody does not affect us for instance as a “disturbance”. Now comes an especially mellifluous sound, a phrase that especially arouses sensible pleasure or even displeasure. This particularity does not merely become affective for itself in a living manner; rather, the entire melody is accentuated in one stroke to the extent that it is still living within the field of the present. (Husserl 2001: 203)

Affection, meant as “the allure given to consciousness, the peculiar pull (*Zug*) that an object given to consciousness exercises on the ego” (Husserl 2001: 196), radiates backwards into the retentive element. It means that, once sound and affection meet, the melody receives a unified emphasis and even what has already passed now takes on a different value. At the same time, affection penetrates every singular sound and specific emergencies “fostering special affections. [...] The particularity of the sound has made me attentive. And through this I became attentive to the entire melody, and, understandably, the particularities thus became alive to me” (Husserl 2001: 203).

In genetic analysis, the fundamental role of affection does not only involve the melody going backwards, namely involving the *backwards of the melody*, but once arisen, it even goes forward and new sounds of the melody become listening objects (Soueltzis 2021: 178). Sound formations (*Tongebilde*), which might not have fulfilled the conditions of affection, become now the objects of thematic interest (Husserl 2001: 205).

The key point is the already-availability of sound.

A sound can originally arise only thanks to an affection that, moving from the impressional present, affects the ego and invites him to actively turn, thus bringing out at once the whole sound, but this possibility is, in turn, due to the fact that the sound was already passively constituted, already available to the ego, even if it was not strong enough to impose itself on his attention. (Costa 1999: 227)

In Husserlian terms (Husserl 1983: 237-8), the *hyle* concerns the genetic structure of the fluent (*fließende*) dimension of affection as fundamental matter – and it is also present as streaming (*strömende Hyle*) at the basis of the original flow into immanence (Rabanaque 2003: 213; to be compared with Husserl 1991, see also Brough 2010). “That is, hyletic fusion must be carried out in the fixed necessity of temporal constitution”

(Husserl 2001: 208). And, again, sound is the perfect example: we come across a hyletic datum that originally springs from the present, which through its temporalization hits, i.e., it *affects*, the subject – if that term accurately renders the German *affiziert*. The problem with this elemental stratum of sensation remains *how* a datum like this can give itself¹.

Hyletic data, and the acts that animate them, survive the phenomenological reduction. If something survives the reduction, it is *immanent* or *really inherent* in consciousness. These “immanental data” are not among the transcendent objects – the objects of representation – that get excluded or “placed in brackets”. They are part of the “phenomenological residuum” and thus part of the proper subject matter of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology. (Williford 2013: 503)

A first attempt at an answer comes from transcendental phenomenology, according to which hyletic data are what survives to the phenomenological reduction since they are immanent data that the very act of refraining highlights. The tangibility remains at the limits of what is possible, undermining again the validity of this postulation. However, one possible exemplification is either that of reiterated perception or illusion, when hyletic data lend themselves to more intentional forms (ivi: 506). For example, a textural component remains unchanged (the same distribution of whites and blacks), but it is perceived through dif-

¹ By using the term “datum”, one runs the risk of arising another obscure problem related to the concept of *hyle*, namely the possibility of assimilating the *hyle* to the sense data of the empiricist tradition. Assimilating hyletic data to that of empirical sensibility would mean that the phenomenological analysis, analyzing the constitutive elements of the noetic activity of consciousness, can isolate the primary elements of perception. This involves the assimilation of the overall underlying theoretical implant, i.e., every perceptive experience is determined by something that according to the principle of causality acts on the subject repositing the dichotomous relationship between subject and object that Husserlian gnoseology tried to overturn with the notion of intentionality. See (Gonnella 2020: 106 ff.), and (Williford 2013: 512) for the problem of qualia. For Gallagher, on the other hand, there are some parallelisms between hyletic data and qualia, as well as between the critiques of the two concepts. The solution, according to him, rests on an account of the body, “overlooked or ignored”, that turns towards an enactive phenomenology (Gallagher 2012: 93). For an account of the development of the genetic inquiry in relation to the *hyle*, see (Martelli 2020). In this sense, I use the expression “sense data” to refer to the empiricist tradition, while I use “sensory data” to refer to the generally intended data of sensory experience or sensation-contents.

ferent forms (different figures are created). This process informs us about an elemental stratum of sensation. Furthermore, since this necessarily means that hyletic datum does not coincide with the intentional correlate of consciousness, we can talk about an obscure presence of *hyle*; it is therefore impossible to head towards that elemental stratum and simply say that a certain distribution of whites and blacks is *stricto sensu* the hyletic datum. By doing so, we would give hyletic data a meaning formed by the contribution of intentionality – “being a certain distribution of whites and blacks” –, which would simply not allow us to see them. Hyletic data are not determinations of things, i.e., their color, flavor, or smell; they are instead what remains when the refraining withdraws the empirical precipitates of the sense organs from the lived experience. The same material agglomerate lends itself to different forms of meaning, and through this process, the existence of an invariant, present across all the different phases, emerges. To separate hyletic data from every intentionality while reinserting them into an intentional relationship in order to see them *as hyletic data* – namely to undress something (the hyletic datum) from intentionality recognized as something – is still *ipso facto* the conferment of meaning operating in the intentional relationship (Smith 1977).

Hyletic data are rather identified by inferences: through different morphogenetic animations something remains and we are informed about it.

However, the very possibility of animating them *now* as presentative of an object and *then* as themselves hyle only shows that there is something that remains relatively stable across different animations, something not tied to a particular animation. [...] They do not have to appear as utterly free-floating data. We have to get at them by reflective abstraction. But this does not mean we know about them only by inference or that they are constructed by theory or conceptualization. (Williford 2013: 507)

Williford reminds us that the specific (phenomenological) inference is not that pertaining to the domain of logic, nor are hyletic data something constructed by theory. The inference is an oblique inference that tries to obtain the hyletic stratum, conceived as the aesthetic fundament, through evidence. The phenomenological inference is linked with

epoché, which should be beyond any theories bracketing as much the natural attitude as any theory that accompanies it².

In conclusion, a rigorous restitution of immanent data, devoid of any lived experience, seems hardly possible without falling into another theory. Obtaining hyletic data, on the other hand, appears to be a futile endeavor even before we begin to try. How can we autonomously grasp from the categorial structures of predicative synthesis something that precedes them, especially when the thematization takes place through those same categories? Should we postulate the validity of a pre-aesthetic level from which the distinction of sensory registers and the forms of sensuous take shape (Dufrenne 1987)? Even here the thematization would dissolve before any grasping. It is therefore necessary to investigate another way and ask about an exemplification of the bracketing of the *Welt der natürlichen Einstellung*. This *prima facie* requires the conceptualization of the *Nullpunkt* of experience, that is: the body.

2. *The hyletic corporeity*

In the *epoché* even the body is bracketed. The conditions for the validity of the link between empirical contents and *Erlebnis*, constituting the basis of sensation for the natural attitude, are suspended. To suspend all of this means to eliminate the instrument of access to sensation, the filtering gate of the senses composed by the body. If we do so, if we suspend the thesis of the worldly existence of the body, we again run into

² However, the conceptualization of *epoché* as something free from theory does not directly result into its realization. This is certainly another obscure veil of phenomenology and its applications. "Näher betrachtet zeigt sich, daß Husserls Andeutung einer Epoché vor und außerhalb aller Theorie doch nicht auf eine ‚theoriefreie‘ Epoché zielt. Die Epoché vor der in §32 der ‚Ideen I‘ vorgenommenen ‚Einschränkung‘ ihres Umfangs ist ebensowenig vor- und außertheoretisch, wie Husserls zweimal geäußerte Behauptung zutrifft, die in den §§ 27 bis 30 gegebene Beschreibung der natürlichen Einstellung sei eine solche ‚vor aller ‚Theorie‘“. Damit meint Husserl, daß die Beschreibung der natürlichen Einstellung keinem wissenschaftlichen oder philosophischen Standpunkt verpflichtet ist, sondern lediglich schlicht darlegt, wie sich Leben-in-der-Welt vollzieht. Dieser Beschreibung der natürlichen Welthaltung kann man jedoch vorwerfen, daß sie ebenso wie die auf den ersten Blick hin noch nicht durch Theoriebezug definierte Epoché bereits auf dem Boden eines bestimmten theoretischen Zugriffs operiert, und zwar desjenigen Zugriffs, der durch die Epoché erst eröffnet werden soll" (Sepp 2003: 200-1).

the belief that the concept of hyletic data is devoid of phenomenological validity (Gallagher 1986: 141). If the body is out of play, how can we experience it at all? If the inferential access, at least logically conceived, does not give us anything, the whole process will be aporetic.

However, the suspended body is intended as *Körper* and not as *Leib* (Husserl 1989; 1980), and through a reevaluation of the relationship *hyle-Leib*, an experience legitimately referred to hyletic data is reanimated. Gallagher talks about *hyletic experience* (Gallagher 1986: 141; 2012: 93 ff.) instead of *hyletic data* or *sensations* precisely because the *hyle* is not a separable datum; it is always given together with other components (sensations, temporal flow) or within a field or *Gestalt*, and it is therefore something *synaesthetic* – if we think about it in relation to the ordinary senses. Therefore, by calling it *hyletic experience*, the aesthetic unity of the experiential field would be respected.

Husserl often returns to this topic as evidenced in the manuscripts (C 3 VI [1931] for *Zeitigung* and the flow; C 6 [1930]; C 15; L I 10; L I 13; L I 17; for the kinaesthetic D 10 I [1932]: 18; for the *Konstitution des immanenten hyletischen Objekts (primäre Inhalte)* L I 1 [1907-1910]: 1-16), and through the recovery of *hyle* within the temporal flow of consciousness (Husserl 2001; 1991; De Warren 2009: 114). Husserl was convinced that hyletic experience was not aporetic and could manifest itself in the kinaesthetic. This was largely intuited by Claesges as early as 1964 when he wrote that a “entscheidende Korrektur der Lehre von der Hyle kann dann im Begriff der Kinästhesie und dem in ihm implizierten doppelten Empfindungsbegriff gesehen werden“ (Claesges 1964: 133), and it is therefore an “Empfindung, die die Organbewegung notwendig begleitet. So vollendet erst die Betrachtung des Leibbewußtseins die Reflexion darauf, daß *Hyle überhaupt nur als Empfindung möglich ist*“ (Claesges 1964: 134). It would be phenomenologically unacceptable to drop the *hyle* to nothing³, but if hyletic experience is not immanent to the con-

³ By remembering the role of *hyle* in the temporalization, we should add that “Empfindung als Empfindung erschließt sich erst in der Reflexion. Das unreflektierte Bewußtsein ist bei Gegenständen, nicht bei Empfindungen. Die Interpretation der Empfindung als Hyle aber hat den Sinn, den Empfindungen einen Ort im reinen Bewußtsein anzuweisen, was dann zu den angegebenen Schwierigkeiten führt. Es ist natürlich möglich, etwa bei der Analyse der Zeitkonstitution oder bei der Analyse solcher Phänomene wie Assoziation und Verschmelzung etc. vom Empfindungscharakter der ‚Bewußtseinsinhalte‘ abzusehen. Daraus ist aber keineswegs der Schluß zu ziehen,

consciousness, the problem concerns the awakening of this dormant experience under the veil of consciousness. In fact, “this does not mean that it is objectively, or noematically, or intentionally transcendent” (Gallagher 1986: 144). It rather belongs pre-reflectively and pre-objectively to the body, and if what we have defined as the obscurity of hyletic data finds a foundation in the fact that: (1) the hyletic data appear as abstractions; (2) if sought in consciousness, they are not found; (3) they appear transcendent to consciousness; then this does not mean that hyletic experience is a misunderstanding of the apparent qualities given by the senses. The body is the place where the manifestations of the shadowy hyletic split take form (Husserl 1989).

Hence in this way *a human being's total consciousness is in a certain sense, by means of its hyletic substrate, bound to the Body*, though, to be sure, the intentional lived experiences themselves are *no longer* directly and properly *localized*; they no longer form a stratum on the Body. Perception, as the touching apprehension of form, does not have its seat in the touching finger in which the touch sensation is localized; [...] The co-intertwined contents of sensation have a localization which is actually intuitively given, but the intentionalities do not, and only metaphorically are they said to be related to the Body or to be in the Body. (Husserl 1989: 160-1)

The *Leib* is the meeting place of hyletic data, which become tangible, and defines the area of a corporeal aesthetics that we can call *somaesthetics* (Shusterman 2018; 2012). The variety of hyletic and somaesthetic experiences is large, and it explicitly involves haptic or haptic-based cases⁴.

Pain, with various qualifications, burning, prickling, itching, ‘crawling’ of the skin, giddiness or light-headedness, faintness, throbbing, tightness, nausea, ‘lump in throat’, fullness, distension, tension, heartburn, tingling, the feeling of being smothered, palpitation, ‘cardiospasm sensation’, flutter, hollowness or emptiness, pressure, heaviness, soothing, sinking, hunger, cramp, swelling, ‘turning’ of the stomach, erotic sensations such as orgasmic ejaculation and genital sensations, bowel sensations, ‘quiver’, sweating, limbs ‘asleep’, chills, pull, ‘pins and needles’, numbness, weakness, dirtiness, sensations of blocked openings, dizzi-

daß eine Hyle möglich oder gegeben ist, die noch nicht Empfindung ist” (Claesges 1964: 134, n. 2).

⁴ This is also interesting from an anthropological perspective on the senses and their relationships. “Because of the eminence of touch in existence, its primary role in ontogenesis, the notion of contact is often extended to the other senses” (Le Breton 2017: 95).

ness, 'thickness' or slowness in movement, 'flushing' (as in a blush), innumerable sensations associated with pregnancy, and sensations of warmth, coldness, etc. (Gallagher 2012: 94-5)

The elemental layers of experience are rooted in corporeity: prior to feeling the wind whistling in the fireplace as "wind in the fireplace", we have the breeze that reaches our skin, the slight rustle that then becomes whistle, and the movement of the ash. It means that "[a]ll experience, insofar as it is conditioned by corporality, is hyletic experience" (Gallagher 1986: 147). The bodily experience is always present, from the kinaesthetic experience intertwined with heartbeat to the excessive sweating in the case of strong stress. In addition, bodily experiences inform us about a direct bond with the surrounding world. "They are, in a general sense, symptoms of the circumstances, signs of environmental pressures, and should be included in the definition of the situation" (Gallagher 1986: 148). The corporeal tension is shown, for example, through an accelerated heartbeat, a good *Stimmung* by a slow breathing or steady beat – all comporting kinaesthetic responses. However, this manifestative bond is not yet an identification between the two. Hyletic data and kinaesthetic experience are not coincident, and their distinction becomes evident during the process of thematization of an object. While the kinaesthetic sensation does not necessarily cooperate in making an object (thematically) present to us, hyletic data lead to something (i.e., an object) that transcends them. The kinaesthetic sphere works together with corporeity, showing to the consciousness the body *that we are* – in the world we are in.

Through the body, a sensuous organization of the field of experience is given, which *prepares* the time for when the consciousness relates to it through intentional relationships. It constitutes a filter for the transition from passivity to the objective thematization carried out by consciousness.

In this regard, the relationship between corporeal states and surrounding environment, which is also evident without citing the hard sciences or Antonio Damasio's generative analysis of feeling (Damasio 1994; 1999; 2003), represents the arise of the material (hyletic) component of experience. The hyletic component of corporeal states has placements that do not only concern sensory data, which exert a constitutive function for objects in space. We, in fact, recognize the sound of the fireplace once the original affection finds the intentional involvement of lived experience and the fireplace is thematized as a present

object – at an earlier level, we are not *listening* to a sound (Palmieri 2018: 134). It is rather involved a set of completely different sensations, e.g., of pleasure, pain, bodily well-being, discomfort.

The “internal” environment that functions homeostatically and automatically, composed of the innumerable physiological and neurological events that occur in the body, is simply an internalized translation and continuation of the “external” environment. Changes in the external environment are always accompanied by changes in the internal one. [...] All of these automatic regulations take place and are lived hyletically in the body. (Gallagher 1986: 155-6; Ales Bello 2005: 297)

Thus, hyletic experience is fundamentally located in the body. It precedes every formal perception that we recognize structured as the sensory systems impose (visible, audible, tactile, etc.) and, as an experience located in the body, it is not a conceptual illusion. Pre-objectification experiences occur in the body; a certain pressure, an excessive heat, a sensation of discomfort, are felt *prior to* the fact that they become the “lamp too close that is about to burn us”. And it is precisely from this hyletic filtering of the body that some of the positions, found in Michel Henry or in the *phénoménologie de la chair* and its proposal about the unity of experience given in the sensuous, on the hyletic-corporeal understanding of *aisthēsis* move.

However, according to Husserl, there is no unity or continuity between hyletic fields; to the visual, tactile, and acoustic fields correspond as many hyletic genres (Gallagher 1986: 153). According to Husserl’s *Phänomenologische Psychologie*, there is no unity between different hyletic data (Husserl 1962). Nevertheless, on the basis of his insistence on kinaesthetic experience, it is possible to interpret the corporeal schema as an organizer of that experience which spontaneously consolidates the data through passive associations, so that different genres of *hyle* are hyletically united at the level of passive synthesis (Biceaga 2010: 95).

3. *Sound hyletic*

In accordance with what has been said, hyletic experience is a bodily experience that precedes perception. We can recognize it through phenomenological inferences, thus visual, tactile, auditory, olfactory, or gustatory perceptions have in the background a hyletic experience lived by the body (Gallagher 1986: 161).

All our seeing, hearing, and tasting take place within the space of the body, and our memories are stored there as well. All the intentional activities, whether perceptual or categorial, occur within the space marked out by the top of the head and the soles of the feet, our front and back, and our right and left sides and arms. The spatiality of the body is not only tactile, but also mobile. We hold sway over the parts of our body and can move them directly; if we wish to move other things, we can do so only by first moving parts of ourselves (we lift something only by lifting our hands and arms, but we do not have to move anything else in order to raise our hands and arms). (Sokolowski 2000: 125)

Such a postulation needs phenomenological evidence as its own final judgment. For what concerns the relationship between sound and *hyle*, especially for a hyletic sound, we have already discussed the issue surreptitiously. According to Husserl, the primary content of every sensory data presents an original level that can be defined hyletic, and sound also has its own hyletic degree. In other words, a sound can be presented in many forms through which something remains invariant and even before any eidetic intuition. This is the material component that accounts for every mutable mode of manifestation.

A violin tone, in contrast, with its objective identity, is given by adumbration, has its changing modes of appearance. These differ in accordance with whether I approach the violin or go farther away from it, in accordance with whether I am in the concert hall itself or am listening through the closed doors, etc. No one mode of appearance can claim to be the one that presents the tone absolutely although, in accordance with my practical interests, a certain appearance has a certain primacy as the normal appearance: in the concert hall and at the “right” spot I hear the tone “itself” as it “actually” sounds. (Husserl 1983: 96)

More interesting is the question of whether a sonorous hyletic, recognizable as sound⁵, exists. According to the reflections above, we then have: (1) hyletic data are something obscure, at least insofar as they exist as obscure until they are illuminated, but once this is done, as fundamentally obscure, they cease to exist – their existence is therefore paradoxical and that is how it has been progressively interpreted; (2) however, there exists an evident fundament of their presence that is

⁵ Related to this concept is that of *rhythm* as it overcomes the borders between inside and outside, linking heterogeneous elements (Tagliaferri 2014). The environment is pervaded by thresholds of rhythmicity that modify the corporeal asset and, at the same time, is experienced according to a specific emotional condition, creating relationships with the surrounding exterior through the corporeity (Bollnow 1956).

shown in the corporeity and all those phenomena that the body presents to us in the encounter with the world; (3) so, there is a schematic unity of the lived body even though we interact with different elements according to sensory register or intentional form.

The sound field deals with reflections on the hyletic component for at least three issues: (1) the identification of the hyletic residue, once concluded the exercise of *epoché*; (2) the corporeal basis as a source of evidence for the hyletic experience and its relationship with the rhythm; (3) the possibility to point out a strictly sound hyletic. Points (1) and (2) will require less space to be dealt with, thus more attention will be paid to point (3).

If with (1) we detect what remains when we fulfill the refraining that withdraws the empirical precipitates of the sense organs from the lived experience, we should have something that remains even if stripped of the constitutive intentionality.

Epoché, the phenomenological reductions, bracketing, and the various terms that go with Husserl are to be here viewed as a means of gradually approximating a certain stratum of experience. It is a beginning which, through both the deconstruction of taken-for-granted beliefs and the reconstruction of a new language and perspective, becomes a prototype for a science of experience. (Ihde 2007: 18)

As Ihde reminds us, the focalization of listening and the bracketing of the global auditory context define a discipline of experience freed from taken-for-granted beliefs.

But a purposeful selective focus on auditory experience does, by its very distortion of the primary global character of experience, show something. Such a selective focus functions regionally like a special *epoché* by creating a specified region of focus. Shifting from an ordinary and taken-for-granted paradigm of thought and focus on auditory experience simultaneously allows us to take note of what often goes unnoted and thus also gives us a fresh sense of experience; but this shift also reveals by rebound something about the traditions of interpretation in which our experiences are embedded. (Ihde 2007: 21)

The question of a musical *epoché* is of the uttermost interest and has a history older than the first (1976) and the second (2007) editions of Ihde's text. Musical *epoché* has been presented as a spontaneous mode of relation that musicians and theorists have shown toward phenomenology and its application. References to *epoché* are found in both the famous Pierre Schaeffer's *écoute réduite* (Schaeffer 1966) and René Leibowitz's

Introduction à la musique de douze sons (Leibowitz 1949), where he compared the twelve-tone composition, i.e., the Arnold Schönberg's dodecaphony, to the Husserlian notion of phenomenological reduction as it bracketed the tonal system. Further assonances occurred a decade later with the reflections on Anton Webern's music carried out in Italy by Luigi Rognoni (Rognoni 1974)⁶.

On the other hand, the question of a sound *epoché* takes shape in a very special way: if before a rigorous reduction of the lived experience precipitates there is the refraining, which brackets all those unnoticed factors "as 'bodily present' or actually fulfillable (intuitable) within ongoing experience" (Ihde 2007: 28), then listening to a cello in front of us means being visually exposed to the wall behind, and feeling the heaviness of the body pressing against the chair, the light breeze coming from the window, and the flow of cars in the background. If we said to listen to the *Cello Suite No. 1* in G Major, it would not be enough. We are surrounded by an omnidirectional feeling that *also* includes the cello and its sounds. By the focus of listening – bracketing the other sound possibilities –, sensibility is reduced to a strictly sonorous immanence datum.

I can *focus* on my listening and thus make the auditory dimension stand out. But it does so only relatively. I cannot isolate it from its situation, its embedment, its "background" of global experience. In this sense a "pure" auditory experience in phenomenology is impossible, but, as a focal dimension of global experience, a concentrated concern with listening is possible. Auditory experience can be thematized relatively, in relation to its contextual appearance within global experience. But just as no "pure" auditory experience can be found, neither could a "pure" auditory "world" be constructed. Were it so constructed it would remain an abstract world. (Ihde 2007: 44)

And also:

Ordinary experience is global. We are so involved in our traffic with the world that we usually do not notice or reflect upon the way in which we experience the world. Phenomenology is one attempt to step back from certain types of involvement with the world and direct our attention to specific features of our experience of the world. Herein lies the due to the *epoché* and the direction of phenomenological description. Thus while our original experience is global or

⁶ Rognoni cites Enzo Paci's works. Paci was Giovanni Piana's master, who emphasized, specifically in relation to Rognoni 1966, that "then it is possible to speak of a 'free and open sound space' in relation to the dodecaphony it seems to me really very strange" (Piana 2007: 331).

total we can, nevertheless, isolate certain dimensions of that experience and submit them to descriptive scrutiny. Note here that it takes no apparent effort to experience things globally – but that it does take a disciplined effort to reduce global experience to any given dimension of that experience. (Ihde 1970: 203; 2007: 204)

In the room, the body experiences its surrounding by somaesthetic mode, acting as a filter for experiential data. In this sense, the body constantly receives rhythmic-vibrational information from the surrounding space, and every sound experience is, in this very sense, rhythmic (2):

Hearing, grasping, understanding, “getting” a groove requires actual body movement. We grasp a groove through our bodies. We cannot grasp a groove by means of the intellect, by learning certain propositions, principles, or concepts. And we cannot grasp a groove in passive, auditory perception alone, through mere listening. This grasping involves listening (of course) but it also involves a kind of active, practical, non-theoretical knowing. We come to understand grooves *by moving*. (Roholt 2014: 3-4)

Rhythmic impulses as well as homeostatic, pulsing, and interoceptive variations constitute what we experience as sound. Through corporeal sensation, we resonate with listening (I hear sounds with my whole body) and the performance of others (i.e., musicians), especially by including changes in the body state *through the hyletic dimension of experience*.

As an exercise in focal attention, the auditory dimension from the outset begins to display itself as a pervasive characteristic of bodily experience. Phenomenologically I do not merely hear with my *ears*, I *hear* with my whole body. My ears are at best the *focal* organs of hearing. This may be detected quite dramatically in listening to loud rock music. The bass notes reverberate in my stomach, and even my feet “hear” the sound of the auditory organ. (Ihde 2007: 44)

The rhythm, but also the sound purified of its rhythmic dimension (e.g., the ambient music or some *sonorous landscapes*), is perceived with the whole body, on the skin and in the haptic dimension, where it encounters the body schema.

The ways that the body lives its environment, and correlatively, the ways that the environment conditions the body are translated into hyletic experiences that condition the perception of things and events at hand. Thus, on the basis of these movements and shifts that generate the changing hyletic experience a context will take on certain emotional coloration: a situation becomes difficult, dangerous, frightening, pleasant, or can be termed ‘love’, ‘anger’, ‘fear’, etc. depending

upon how the body lives it. This does not mean or imply that *conscious* experiences of bodily states accompany all perceptions or emotions, rather the conscious experience of anything is conditioned by the hyletic experience of the body which for the most part operates non-consciously. (Gallagher 1986: 160-1)⁷

Sounds affect the body (heart rate, blood pressure, skin conductance, skin temperature, breathing) and induce *emotional states* (through bodily variations) in performers and listeners alike (Mithen 2006: 94). The emotional response affects the body through muscle tension, respiratory and heart rate, sweating, gastric activity, and hormone production (Schön, Akiva-Kabiri, Vecchi 2018: 98; Schön 2018: 119).

The question of the hyletic nature of rhythmicity and sonority experienced by the body appears as legitimate as the questions of whether sound, in addition to being something that informs us of a world and its objects, is something received by the body and a form of hyletic experience at this stage. As Merlau-Ponty points out:

There is an objective sound that resonates outside of me in the musical instrument, an atmospheric sound that is between the object and my body, a sound that vibrates in me “as if I had become the flute or the clock,” and finally a last stage where the sonorous element disappears and becomes a highly precise experience of a modification of my entire body. There is but a narrow margin available to sensory experience: either the sound and the color, through their own arrangement, sketch out an object – the ashtray, the violin – and this object speaks directly to all of the senses; or at the other extreme of experience, the sound and color are received in my body, and it becomes difficult to restrict my experience to a single sensory register: it spontaneously overflows toward all the others. (2012: 236)

Once received in the body, the sound pours haptically and it is difficult to separate the hyletic fields, i.e., to separate the tactile (hyletic) data from the sound: the body synthesizes the sound (hyletic) datum and its tactile materiality in a hyletic unity. The fundamental component of the

⁷ Even Gardner (2011: 111) points out something similar in a clear and direct way when he talks about music. “There is no question that the auditory sense is crucial to all musical participation: any argument to the contrary would be fatuous. Yet it is equally clear that at least one central aspect of music – rhythmic organization – can exist apart from any auditory realization. It is, in fact, the rhythmic aspects of music that are cited by deaf individuals as their entry point to musical experiences. [...] Thus, it is probably fair to say that certain aspects of the musical experience are accessible even to those individuals who (for one or another reason) cannot appreciate its auditory aspects”.

sound is indeed experienced with the whole body: the task of a conscious “listening”, that is to translate that set of sensory data into conscious experience, does not *then* pertain to the ear as an organ, but rather to consciousness⁸. At its fundamental material level, sound “is a physical perturbation of the molecules of the air. When it is very loud, particularly with sounds in the lower frequencies, we feel it with our bodies – as vibrations at the extremities, or even thumping in our chests. The ear is basically a remarkably sensitive and discerning refinement of our capacity to feel sound” (Switzer 2010: 91). Sound is a physical perturbation of the air, or another *medium*, which as such involves the ear as much as skin and bones⁹. When we hear a sound, we perceive a certain *intensity* through the body effects recalled above; it can chill us, stress us, stimulate the digestion or even make impossible to peacefully experience a space. “There is no doubt that loudness is a necessary dimension of every consciously perceived sound. If we perceive a sound, whatever quality that sound has it will necessarily have a certain amount of loudness. There must be a sound pressure above the auditory threshold so that the pressure gives rise to neural consequences that lead to a conscious perception of sound” (Schmicking 2005: 170).

Thus, if hyletic experience is a bodily experience and sounds affect the flesh of the body through intensity and rhythmicity, we still need to define the sound hyletic, namely point (3). We should turn to:

Eine gewisse ‘reine hyletische’ Unterlage ohne Vorstrukturierung durch eine gegenständliche Organisation, allerdings nur, wenn diese Beobachtungen und Aus-sagen exakt genug und generalisierbar sind. Allerdings lässt sich heute mit Si-cherheit sagen, dass sich haptisch erworbenes Wissen sofort auf das neu erwor-bene Sehvermögen operierter Blindgeborener übertragen lässt. (Schmicking 2003: 94)

Problematic, Schmicking says, “bleibt auf jeden Fall der Anspruch der Husserlschen Theorie der Hyle, die ‚sensuellen Daten‘ direkt erfassen zu können” (Schmicking 2003: 94). The hyletic datum – or “hyletic content” (*hyletischer Gehalt*) – is the real content of perceptive consciousness,

⁸ Even the neurological and physiological inquiries do not know how the conscious and final experience of listening happens – precisely because it involves the problem of consciousness. They describe the process of hearing a sound, which *then* becomes listened.

⁹ In this regard, we should remember the work of the 1961 Nobel Prize winner Georg von Békésy, who studied the role of bone conduction in auditory perception.

and the fundament of feeling and sensuous impulses. It includes intramodal information (*intramodalen Informationen*), such as the tactile one, involved in the constitution of intramodal perceptive contents (e.g., visual-tactile) (Schmicking 2003: 314). The perceptive content, “the real content of perceptive consciousness” (*der reelle Gehalt des Wahrnehmungsbewusstseins*), encompasses hyletic, proprioceptive and kinaesthetic elements (Schmicking 2003: 318), and in this sense there is a hyletic sound datum, that is an *audiohyletischer Gehalt* that does not coincide with the pure sensations of the old psychology (such as that of Helmholtz or Mach) and constructs the elements of the lived experience regardless of the perceptive conditions. “Die auditive Hyle ist insofern der unerbittliche ‘Pacemaker’ der auditiven Akte” (Schmicking 2003: 109). For example, in the Doppler effect, namely in the change of frequency caused by the movement toward or away of the sound source and/or by the movement of the observer, the experiential basis is kinaesthetic (Schmicking 2012). Here the *hyle* is involved, since the hyletic variation, caused by the effect, is felt.

In Abschattungsreihen perceptiver Daten wird eine Gleichmäßigkeit (die Konstanz einer Bewegung) konstituiert, d.h. der Hörer kompensiert die Modifikationen der Position des Klangs und der Orientierung des eigenen Wahrnehmungsleibs, in der die Erscheinungsreihen des Klangs kinästhetisch motiviert sind. Während das Auto die Straße entlang knattert, dreht man sich beispielsweise um 90°, überquert die Straße etc. Man hört unabhängig von seiner räumlichen Position und Orientierung zur Klangquelle die hyletische, durch den Dopplereffekt bedingte Veränderung, zugleich aber die Linearität der Bewegung. (Schmicking 2003: 145)

As the material fundament of sensibility, hyletic data constitute what we physically interact with. There is therefore not only the reduction of listening contexts that defines the musical listening (Ihde) or the reduced listening (Schaeffer), or, in Husserlian terms, the attainment of a highlighting of the *hyle* dismissed from every *morphé*, but also, after the body analysis suggested by Husserl himself, the possibility emerges that the hyletic sound is body-experienced, i.e., a body experience, thus a sound hyletic. Through the body, pre-reflexive hyletic data are received to be pre-reflexively “used”, and then to be thematized.

Thus it is that the very flesh of the body leaves a sonic fingerprint of sorts that helps enable us to experience the environing soundscapes as such. This corporeal imprinting of sound extends also to the physicality of the environing world;

we hear the walls, the floor and ceiling, the furniture and curtains of the room, or the trees, rocks and buildings of an outdoor setting. (Switzer 2010: 92)

The unfathomability of hyletic data is overcome by the contact of movement, listening and touch shown in the flesh. “While sight alone can all too easily turn the world into a mere spectacle, and things into phantoms, hearing like touch returns us to our corporeal connectedness to reality, as it were, in the flesh” (Switzer 2010: 93). By listening, we immediately meet something in the body prior to its thematization – before it is genetically thematized by the conscious area – in terms of a passive synthesis. Therefore, “what we need to attend to is the co-constitution of meaning and spatiality within what we would best call [...] ‘listening’. And clearly this is not happening in the focal regard of consciousness, but in the background, and in terms of what Husserl first explored as ‘passive synthesis’” (Switzer 2010: 95).

As Husserl points out:

it is indeed an “appearance” which refers back to the kinesthetic “circumstances” to which it appertains. We are always led back further analytically and arrive finally at sense-objects in a different sense, ones which lie at the ground (constitutively understood) of all spatial objects and, consequently, of all thing-objects of material reality, too, and which lead us back again to certain ultimate syntheses, but to syntheses which precede every thesis. (Husserl 1989: 24)

And in this sense, a tone played on a violin:

Can be apprehended as a real violin-tone and hence as a real occurrence in space. It then remains the same no matter whether I move away from it or approach it, or whether the door of the adjacent room, in which it is being played, is open or closed [...] the spatial apprehension can also be suspended, and then it becomes a mere “sense datum” instead of a spatially sounding tone. [...] Here, with the pure datum of sensation, we encounter a pre-giveness which yet precedes the constitution of the object as object. (Husserl 1989: 24-5)

The pre-giveness which precedes the constitution of the object offers a sound sensation, an *original constitution* of sound as an object, which is not – even if Husserl is not always so precise in the distinction – the *Objekt*, rather, the *Gegestand*: the pre-giveness preceding the constitution of the object refers to the noematic correlate and not to the transcendent.

Thus it seems we must conceive of a prior “tonal sensation” which is neither an apprehension nor a grasping of an object, “an original constitution of the object-tone which, as a pre-giving consciousness, is prior.” [...] Thus, his effort here is not merely to describe the psychological experience of hearing a sound one cannot quite locate or identify; rather, the goal it seems is to take us to the deepest level of sense-constitution in the mode of perception – and beyond. For here we encounter the pre-localized as such, a suffusive, “elemental” sonority, an auditory milieu so pervasive as to be akin to silence, yet alive with contours and possibilities. (Switzer 2010: 97)

We move ourselves and physically interact, kinaesthetically, through a body in motion, firstly because we perceive the hyletic materiality in the body no longer understood as an object (*Körper*), but rather as lived (*Leib*). We musically listen to a performance and appreciate it for the interpretation through a rigorous set of elements that constitute its aesthetic qualities – agogics, speed, breaths, intonation, the relationship with the original performative contest – because they are pre-given at a corporeal level. Again, the evidence is grounded in the responses and variations of the body’s asset, which does not mean approaching a biological reductionism, but opening up to an elaboration of the fundamentals of music and sound perception¹⁰.

4. *Conclusions*

The obscurity of hyle, intended as a real component of the fundamentals of sensibility, has been cleared up through the highlighting of the corporeity involved in the hyletic experience. It represents a level of experience whose evidence is found in the sound experience, precisely because before any objectualization, the sound is experienced with the whole body. The conscious level of sound deals with passive syntheses which form the sound material primarily through the encounter with the body, showing all the non-conscious activities of the hyletic field, such as sweating, heart rate, digestion, homeostatic equilibrium, etc. They are the material stuff of experience, which once recognized become some-

¹⁰ A sound dynamic constituted by melodic repetitions with variations in sound intensity or, more simply, the listening of a diminished seventh, are sound moments in which the listener finds himself involved before any cultural or theoretical-musical background due to the affection of the elemental stratum of sound experience. Starting from it, a theoretical-formal analysis can then be construed.

thing else; they are in-formed, meaning that what is unnoticed becomes my “agitation”, my “rapid heart rate”. Through phenomenological analysis, the *Leib* stands as the exhibitiv fulcrum of hyletic givenness. “Il doit, comme on dit, ‘prendre le rythme’, et comme nous l’avons dit, jusque dans les plus infimes détails, jusqu’à la manière d’attaquer les sons, de les faire durer, de les intensifier ou de les affaiblir, de les faire fluctuer à l’intérieur d’eux-mêmes. Cela suppose une ‘adaptation’ remarquable du corps vivant (*Leib*)” (Richir 2005: 15).

Hearing sounds is the emblematic example of hyletic experience; it “is highly multidimensional – it implicates balance and motility in ways that implicate whole body experience intimately” (Ihde 2007: 248). Sounds have an immanent component in the body sensations: they are part of the environment and modify who interacts with them (Ihde 2007: 76). “Das Widerhallen als Resonanz der Klänge im Leib verweist auf dessen räumliche Verfasstheit. Klänge verändern eben nicht nur die nähere Umgebung der auditiv Wahrnehmenden, sondern sie sind immer schon ein immanenter Bestandteil der je gegebenen Umwelt und nehmen Einfluss auf das mit ihnen interagierende leibliche Empfinden” (Schulz 2018: 195).

Thus, the sound experience is based on a corporeal-material level because the original material of sound givenness is experienceable at a body level. We hear the vibrations, rhythms, and sounds pervading our body before recognizing their pitch, source, or the musical genres from which they come. We suggest calling this fundamental dimension of experience shown in the sound field the sound hyletic, which shows a possibility for an aesthesiology of the hyle¹¹.

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¹¹ Even the phenomenological musical analysis cannot but start from here. Thus, for example, from the claims of Joseph F. Smith’s phenomenological inquiry (Smith 1979; see Pedone 1995: 222).

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