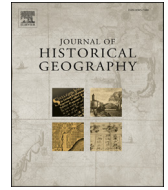




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## Journal of Historical Geography

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jhg](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jhg)

# Ephemeral climates: Plato's geographic myths and the phenomenological nature of climate and its changes

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## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 16 March 2021

Received in revised form

15 March 2022

Accepted 7 April 2022

## Keywords:

Ancient Greek philosophy

Phenomenology

Myth

Climate

Climate change

## ABSTRACT

Historical and cultural approaches to climate generally consider climate to be a stabilising concept between weather and culture. Different historical and cultural concepts of climate signify different ways of learning to live with the weather. However, anthropogenic climate change evidences the limit of this approach: instead of stabilising, climates ephemeralise together with the ways we have come to adapt to them. Changing climates require a concept of climate that captures how climates are experienced both as stable and ephemeral. To create such a concept, I engage in an exercise of counterfactual etymology, reconstructing the concept of climate that might have emerged from the Ancient Greek term *hora* as opposed to *klima*. Central to my re-creation of phenomenological climate are Plato's myths, through which I highlight the methodological kinship between myth and phenomenology. Drawing on a later dialogue, *Philebus*, I provide an ontological account of climates as both stable and ephemeral. I conclude by situating my approach to climate and its changes in recent work on the relationship between weather and climate, arguing for the necessity of phenomenological climate in order to make sense of what changes with climate change. My turn to Ancient Greek philosophy and its application to the phenomenology of climate and its changes sounds out a novel approach to research in historical geography.

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC, Glossary, in: T.F. Stocker et al. (Eds.), *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, Cambridge, 2013, 1450.

<sup>2</sup> J.R. Fleming and V. Jankovic, Revisiting Klima, *Osiris* 26 (2011), 2, emphasis mine; for an overview of different evolutions of climate concepts, see also A. Ford and K.M. Norgaard, Whose everyday climate cultures? Environmental subjectivities and invisibility in climate change discourse, *Climatic Change* 163 (2020); M. Heymann, The evolution of climate ideas and knowledge, *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 1 (2010); E. Horn, Air as Medium, *Grey Room* 73 (2018); T.B. Leduc, *Climate, culture, change: Inuit and Western dialogues with a warming North*, Ottawa, ON, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> D.N. Livingstone, The moral discourse of climate: historical considerations on race, place and virtue, *Journal of Historical Geography* 17 (1991); D.N. Livingstone, Race, space and moral climatology: notes toward a genealogy, *Journal of Historical Geography* 28 (2002); G.C.D. Adamson, 'The languor of the hot weather': everyday perspectives on weather and climate in colonial Bombay, 1819–1828, *Journal of Historical Geography* 38 (2012); M. Mahony, For an empire of 'all types of climate': meteorology as an imperial science, *Journal of Historical Geography* 51 (2016); R. Hamblyn, The whistleblower and the canary: rhetorical constructions of climate change, *Journal of Historical Geography* 35 (2009); M.T. Bravo, Voices from the sea ice: the reception of climate impact narratives, *Journal of Historical Geography* 35 (2009); S. Daniels and G.H. Endfield, Narratives of climate change: introduction, *Journal of Historical Geography* 35 (2009); D.M. Liverman, Conventions of climate change: constructions of danger and the dispossession of the atmosphere, *Journal of Historical Geography* 35 (2009).

What climate is and how it is known is of central concern to historical geography. Through a historical lens, climate no longer appears as the mere 'statistical description [of average weather] in terms of the mean and variability of relevant quantities over a period of time ranging from months to thousands or millions of years'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, such a 'definition of climate as a statistical index is an anomaly'.<sup>2</sup> Historical geographers have, instead, been interested in, for instance, how climate has become entangled in questions of morality and imperialism, how climate change has been rhetorically constructed, and whom, once rhetorically constructed, narratives of climate change (crisis) serve.<sup>3</sup>

Going one step further, cultural geographers and anthropologists have investigated the very nature of climate itself.<sup>4</sup> As Hulme notes

<sup>4</sup> Strauss and Orlove (Eds.), *Weather, climate, culture*, Oxford, 2003; Barnes and Dove (Eds.), *Climate Cultures. Anthropological Perspectives on Climate Change*, New Haven/London, 2015; M. Schnegg, Ontologies of climate change, *American Ethnologist* 48 (2021); H. Knox, *Thinking Like a Climate*, Durham, NC, 2020; C. Brace and H. Geoghegan, Human geographies of climate change: Landscape, temporality, and lay knowledges, *Progress in Human Geography* 35 (2011); I. Dietzsch, Klimawandel. Kultur- und anthropologische Perspektiven darauf, wie ein abstrakter Begriff erfahrbar gemacht wird, *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* 113 (2017).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2022.04.003>

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This needs saying right from the start: *climate is hard to place and even its existence is questionable*. It seems to be everywhere (Can you escape from climate? Is anywhere on Earth climateless?) and yet it is nowhere (Can you point to climate or take me to see it?). People seem to know intuitively what climate is and yet they struggle to articulate an adequate definition of it.<sup>5</sup>

In his earlier account of the social construction of weather and climate, Stehr argues that these questions concerning climate generally do not arise precisely because they are

concealed by the routine, the ease and the frequency with which we use these terms in a variety of contexts. [...] Yet, the very centrality of these terms also hides ambiguity, fragility and perhaps a lack of real comprehension.<sup>6</sup>

Cultural approaches to understanding climate and its changes generally agree with Stehr that climate is 'a largely taken-for-granted setting', though they might disagree what shape this setting takes.<sup>7</sup> The idea of climate functions as a mediating and stabilising force between weather and culture, lending coherency and regularity to otherwise capricious weather.<sup>8</sup> By extension, climate also coheres societies in distinct ways as they come to adapt to their characteristic weather.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps it is the uncertainty and ambiguity around how and to what extent climates do this—climate's 'near infinite plasticity'—that gives climates such imaginative power and consequently makes them such rich objects of geographic and anthropological study.<sup>10</sup>

When historical geographers study climate, they consider how people conceive of climate. Climate here acts as an object around which otherwise ephemeral aspects of human culture materialise: What people say and write about their own and other's climates reveals something about their deeper seated ontological, epistemological, political or moral beliefs.<sup>11</sup> They sediment in climate concepts. Conversely, by studying what someone says and writes about climate, one can hermeneutically uncover these underlying beliefs, which might have otherwise remained ephemeral.<sup>12</sup>

To become sites of sedimentation, climates must be relatively stable. They must endure longer than what they shape: weather and culture. Rapid anthropogenic climate change then presents a conceptual challenge. Climate no longer fulfils the stabilising function at its very centre: 'the possibility of [climatic] stability is a chimera'.<sup>13</sup> Consequently,

Climate can no longer be helpful as an idea that sits between weather and culture because weather and culture are fusing into a single reality with no independent mediator; we are the weather and the weather is us [ ...].<sup>14</sup>

Herein lies the limit of a cultural approach to understanding the nature of climate and its changes; to approaching climate as an idea. With the undoing of Holocene climates, their sedimentary nature erodes too. How, then, does one account for *what* is changing with climate change?

Although the increasing public consciousness of anthropogenic climate change certainly calls Stehr's argument that climate is 'a largely taken-for-granted setting' into question, the routine, ease, and frequency with which terms such as climate change, crisis or emergency are used may hide ambiguities and fragilities, may betray a lack of real comprehension of a different sort and cover over 'ontological inconsistencies'.<sup>15</sup> Using Plato's idiom, relying on too ambiguous an understanding of 'climate' risks turning climate into a 'leaky sink', slowly draining whichever meaning one places in it.<sup>16</sup>

### Creating climate concepts

In what follows, I develop a phenomenological concept of climate, accounting for how climates sediment and elutriate, stabilise and ephemeralise in experience, for how they come to hold meaning and become undone. I argue that phenomenology can help us make sense of *how climates change*; 'how experiential knowledge coalesces in knowledge of climate and a way of understanding global scale climate change/crisis'.<sup>17</sup>

My account commences from the insight that climate change not only describes 'a mutation of this climate (warming, depleting, becoming more volatile) but an alternation of what we take climate to be'.<sup>18</sup> I agree with Neimanis and Walker's assessment that climate has taken on an 'abstract quality' in 'contemporary Western societies', and that such an understanding of climate change should be challenged through 'concept-creation'.<sup>19</sup> Their feminist concept, *weathering*, provides 'a logic, a way of being/becoming, or a mode of affecting and differentiating that brings humans into relation with more-than-human weather'.<sup>20</sup> By creating this concept, Neimanis and Walker 'hope to show that these distinctions between climate and weather are tenuous'.<sup>21</sup>

### *klima*

The practice of concept-creation is not unique to feminist new-materialist approaches to understanding climate and its changes. Turning to the etymological origin of the word 'climate', the concept can be traced back to the Ancient Greek word *klima* [κλίμα], meaning 'inclination, slope of ground'.<sup>22</sup> Following Dicks historical account, the origin of *klima* lies not in geography, but astronomy

<sup>5</sup> M. Hulme, *Weathered. Cultures of Climate*, London, 2017, 1, emphasis mine.

<sup>6</sup> N. Stehr, Trust and climate, *Climate Research* 8 (1997), 164.

<sup>7</sup> Stehr, Trust and climate, 167; Ford and Norgaard, *Whose everyday climate cultures?*

<sup>8</sup> Hulme, *Weathered*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> T. Watsuji, *A climate. A philosophical study*, Tokyo, 1961.

<sup>10</sup> M. Hulme, *Why we disagree about climate change: understanding controversy, inaction and opportunity*, Cambridge/New York, 2009, 28.

<sup>11</sup> Adamson, 'The languor of the hot weather'; D.N. Livingstone, Reflections on the cultural spaces of climate, *Climatic Change* 113 (2012); J. Golinski, *British weather and the climate of enlightenment*, Chicago, 2007; D.R. Coen, *Climate in motion: science, empire, and the problem of scale*, Chicago, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> D.N. Livingstone, Tropical Hermeneutics: Fragments for a Historical Narrative: an Afterword, *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 21 (2000).

<sup>13</sup> Hulme, *Weathered*, 152.

<sup>14</sup> Hulme, *Weathered*, 152.

<sup>15</sup> A.J. Nightingale et al., Beyond Technical Fixes: climate solutions and the great derangement, *Climate and Development* 12 (2019), 347.

<sup>16</sup> Plato, Cratylus, in: J.M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Eds.), *Complete works*, Indianapolis, 1997, 440c.

<sup>17</sup> S. Wright and M. Tofa, Weather geographies: Talking about the weather, considering diverse sovereignties, *Progress in Human Geography* 0 (2021), 8, emphasis mine.

<sup>18</sup> C. Colebrook, A Globe of One's Own: In Praise of the Flat Earth, *SubStance* 41 (2012), 30.

<sup>19</sup> A. Neimanis and R.L. Walker, Weathering: Climate change and the "thick time" of transcorporeality, *Hypatia* 29 (2014), 559–560.

<sup>20</sup> Neimanis and Walker, *Weathering*, 560.

<sup>21</sup> Neimanis and Walker, *Weathering*, 562.

<sup>22</sup> H.G. Liddell and Scott R., *A Greek-English Lexicon. Revised and augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie*, Oxford, 1940.

(specifically the work of Hipparchus)<sup>23</sup>: Each point on earth's surface is 'sloped' in relation to celestial phenomena, such as the location of Polaris (the 'North Star') in the night sky of the Northern hemisphere.

Obviously the amount of the inclination of the cosmos, measured by the height of the celestial pole above the horizon, gives the latitude of the place of observation; hence the three words κλίμα, ἔγκλιμα and ἔγκλισις used by themselves came to be synonyms for geographical latitude [...].<sup>24</sup>

Gradually, the meaning 'slope of the sky' shifted to the slope of the earth itself: the celestial turning terrestrial.<sup>25</sup> The parallels of latitude that thus emerged along the surface of the earth form the boundary lines of different regions, of climatologically habitable and uninhabitable zones according to their relative distance from the equator and poles, described earlier by Aristotle and later more closely identified by Strabo.<sup>26</sup>

Mauelshagen makes the case that modern climatology's very inception is itself tied up with a process of concept-recreation, with a 'semantic innovation', first evidence of which is to be found in Montesquieu's and Espiard De La Borde's work.<sup>27</sup> Up until the mid-18th century, to speak of the *klima* of a place 'was tantamount to offering coordinates, but not weather conditions.'<sup>28</sup> Consequentially, the concept of physical climate, of 'a multi-factorial causal concept which explains the heat distribution of an area', came to replace *klima* as an 'almost meaningless, purely descriptive geographic category of place' through a series of re-definitions.<sup>29</sup> Mauelshagen goes on to argue that it was this transition from climate as *descriptive* to climate as a *causal* and *dynamic* concept which allowed the very idea of climate *change*—across time, not across space—to emerge.<sup>30</sup> To trace the emergence of the concept of climate back to the history of meteorology and the development of meteorological instruments, to define climate as the 'statistics of weather' is, at best, 'only half the story': "Climate", in the modern sense, is precisely not just the statistics of weather, but a new physical category of the causal description of thermal conditions.<sup>31</sup>

Both the Ancient concept of *klima* and the modern 'neologism "climate"', however, share a celestial origin.<sup>32</sup> Their very meaning depends on viewing climates 'from the outside', spread across the surface of the earth. Following a distinction made by Gibson and later Ingold, the climates arrived at in this way are parts of the physical world, but not environments.<sup>33</sup> They make sense to geographers as 'exhabitants of the earth', viewing the earth from a celestial perspective.<sup>34</sup> What would it, instead, mean to inhabit climate?

*hora*

To answer this question, I undertake a third exercise in concept-(re)creation. Following a counterfactual etymological approach, I consider what climate concept *would have* emerged from the older Ancient Greek term *hora* [ώρα], translated as 'season' or, in the plural, 'climate'.<sup>35</sup>

In his *Airs, Waters, and Places*, Hippocrates discusses the role of *hora*, of seasons and climate on health, the human body, and character.<sup>36</sup> 'Whoever wishes to pursue properly the science of medicine', he writes, 'must proceed thus. First he ought to consider what effects each season of the year can produce [...].'<sup>37</sup> Elsewhere, Hippocrates discusses how differences in climate lead to differences in the very nature of seasons and their effects.<sup>38</sup> Differences in season then describe the changing character of weather over the course of a year (across time), whereas differences in climate describe changes in the character of seasons themselves across space.

In the following section, I create a concept of phenomenological climate—as opposed to the aforementioned concepts of abstract and physical climate—based on a re-creation of *hora* as climate. I do so by subjecting three Platonic dialogues, in which *hora* as climate makes an appearance, to a phenomenological reading.<sup>39</sup> In the process, I highlight the methodological kinship between myth, as employed by Plato, and phenomenology. Plato's 'geographical myths' evidence how both mythical and phenomenological accounts enable 'a perspective which can no longer be integrated into the everyday world, whilst simultaneously opening up the facts and circumstances of the everyday world in an intensified way.'<sup>40</sup>

My engagement with Ancient Greek philosophy, developing a counterfactual etymology of climate based on phenomenological theory, offers a novel approach to both myth, philosophy, and the history of ideas in historical geography. Although my phenomenological rendering of climate and its changes—suggesting a possible alternative climate history and future—contributes to a wider debate around knowing and experiencing climate and its changes, I do not mean to suggest that I am providing a universal account of 'what climate is'. As Hulme has argued, there 'is no single true and eternal definition of climate to be discovered or defended.'<sup>41</sup> Whyte, in coining the term Indigenous climate change studies, has called for greater attention to the heterogeneous ways climate change is understood and experienced in light of the legacies of colonialism.<sup>42</sup>

Further opening up the possibilities of conceptualising and experiencing climate and its changes, I turn to Plato, who might

<sup>23</sup> Herodotus, *Herodotus*, Cambridge, MA, 1920, I, 142; Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon. Revised and augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie*.

<sup>36</sup> Hippocrates, *Airs, Waters, and Places*, in: Hippocrates (Ed.), *Hippocrates Vol. 1*, Cambridge, MA, 1923 on Hippocrates influence on medical geography, see also G. Mitman and R.L. Numbers, From miasma to asthma: The changing fortunes of medical geography in America, *History and philosophy of the life sciences* 25 (2003).

<sup>37</sup> Hippocrates, *Airs, Waters, and Places*, 71.

<sup>38</sup> Hippocrates, *Airs, Waters, and Places*, 107.

<sup>39</sup> The concept of *hora*, in the sense of climate I discuss, appears across Plato's writings: Plato, *Critias*, in: J.M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Eds.), *Complete works*, Indianapolis, 1997, 111c; Plato, *Cratylus*, 410c, 440c; Plato, *The Republic*, in: J.M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Eds.), *Complete works*, Indianapolis, 1997, VII, 516b-c; Plato, *Phaedo*, in: J.M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Eds.), *Complete works*, Indianapolis, 1997, 109a-111c.

<sup>40</sup> M. Essebo, A mythical place: A conversation on the earthly aspects of myth, *Progress in Human Geography* 43 (2019), 526; G. Figal, Modelle und Intensitätsgrade, *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 55 (2007), 676, translation mine.

<sup>41</sup> Hulme, *Weathered*, 16.

<sup>42</sup> K. Whyte, Indigenous climate change studies: Indigenizing futures, decolonizing the Anthropocene, *English Language Notes* 55 (2017).

<sup>23</sup> D.R. Dicks, The ΚΑΙΜΑΤΑ in Greek Geography, *The Classical Quarterly* 5 (1955), 248.

<sup>24</sup> Dicks, The ΚΑΙΜΑΤΑ in Greek Geography, 249.

<sup>25</sup> Dicks, The ΚΑΙΜΑΤΑ in Greek Geography, 249.

<sup>26</sup> Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, Cambridge, MA, 1952, 181–183; Strabo, *Geography, Volume I: Books 1–2*, Cambridge, MA, 1917, II, 505–507; D.R. Dicks, Strabo and the ΚΑΙΜΑΤΑ, *Classical Quarterly* (1956).

<sup>27</sup> F. Mauelshagen, Ein neues Klima im 18. Jahrhundert, *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaft* 10 (2016), 46, translation mine.

<sup>28</sup> Mauelshagen, Ein neues Klima im 18. Jahrhundert, 41, translation mine.

<sup>29</sup> Mauelshagen, Ein neues Klima im 18. Jahrhundert, 50, translation mine.

<sup>30</sup> Mauelshagen, Ein neues Klima im 18. Jahrhundert, 51–54.

<sup>31</sup> Mauelshagen, Ein neues Klima im 18. Jahrhundert, 53, translation mine.

<sup>32</sup> Mauelshagen, Ein neues Klima im 18. Jahrhundert, 51, translation mine.

<sup>33</sup> T. Ingold, Earth, sky, wind, and weather, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13 (2007), S25; J.J. Gibson, *The ecological approach to visual perception*, New York/London, 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Ingold, Earth, sky, wind, and weather, S25.

seem like an unlikely candidate for a critique of 'Western' concepts, to re-imagine climate change through Ancient Greek philosophy. Following Neimanis' and Walker's line of argument, I offer a critique of the 'abstract quality' of climate(-change) in 'contemporary Western society' from within the 'Western' intellectual tradition itself.

## Platonic climates

### (Platonic) Myth in historical geography

Before I delve into Plato's dialogues themselves, it is important to reflect on the role of myth in geographical accounts. In doing so, I seek to avoid one of the pitfalls concerning myths identified by Essebo, namely 'that the concept of myth itself is simply left undefined'.<sup>43</sup>

Essebo has comprehensively mapped out 'the theory (or, rather, theories) of myth as a conceptual aid in the understanding of how perceptions of place order spatial realities', arguing for a 'deepened and mutually beneficial relationship between geography and myth'.<sup>44</sup> Essebo defines myth 'as a taken-for-granted belief that alleviates fear, naturalises ideology, and guides everyday behaviour'.<sup>45</sup> Essebo goes on to clarify that 'myth need neither be entirely true nor entirely false. Its power lies not in its correspondence with truth but with naturalised societal and individual beliefs'.<sup>46</sup> Following Olsson, Essebo argues that 'myth is accepted through repetitious and unreflected use'.<sup>47</sup>

Augmenting Essebo's account of myths and their relevance for historical geography in particular, I introduce Plato's usage of myths as a very different kind of 'conceptual aid in the understanding of how perceptions of place order spatial realities'.<sup>48</sup> Following Lincoln, Essebo explains how Socrates and Plato gave myth 'a new, less flattering meaning, one that resides with us to this day'.<sup>49</sup>

Myths, they claimed, were told by poets and were not to be taken seriously. They were false, inspired, ignorant, and belonged to the (lesser) art of poetry, whilst *logos* was true, reasoned, knowledgeable, and belonged to the science of philosophy.<sup>50</sup>

However, the relationship between 'irrational' *muthos* and 'rational' *logos* is not as clear cut as this account makes it appear.<sup>51</sup> Contrary to Essebo's account of myths, in Plato, 'myth can also say true things' as myths are 'grounded in knowledge'.<sup>52</sup> In Plato's dialogues, myth and 'rational' dialectic argumentation cannot be disentangled.

It is not at all the case that only dialectic represents the true philosophy in Plato's writings: instead, Plato's myth and his dialectic are complementary and interdependent. [...] Without *logos* there would be in Plato's writings no proofs, no analysis, no verifiability, no intellectual conviction; but without *muthos* there would be no models, no global vision, no belief, no emotional motivation.<sup>53</sup>

What distinguishes *muthos* from *logos* in Plato, according to Dixsaut, is that myth 'can be and must be interpreted in order to be understood'.<sup>54</sup> Contrary to Olsson's account, myths can provoke reflection and concept creation, instead of reifying concepts or naturalising ideology. Like stories, myths can 'help to open up the world, not to cloak it'.<sup>55</sup>

As I show, Plato's myths enable us to reflect on our concepts phenomenologically. 'Relating a myth,' Dixsaut writes of Plato, 'is to make us see'.<sup>56</sup> Plato's myths do so by opening up perception and experience to renewed interpretation in particular ways. Myth is 'an education of vision insofar as it makes us see differently'.<sup>57</sup>

Myth then also 'brings us to correct the erroneous names we give things'; myths create concepts.<sup>58</sup> Myths make 'evident, not by demonstration but by reaching an elevated perspective, that our mistaken denominations go along with the narrowness of our vision'.<sup>59</sup>

As a tool for critically reflecting on perception and experience, the apparent weakness of myths (that they distort reality in particular ways) turns out to be their strength: The very point of particular myths is to misrepresent reality in distinct ways so that essential features of reality come to the fore.<sup>60</sup> Myths can provoke conceptual 'intensification'.<sup>61</sup> By being false in a specific way, myths can reveal a truth that is latent and inconspicuous in everyday perception and experience. Through changes in perspective, myths produce 'a shift in cognition that enables us to see from a different angle',<sup>62</sup> both literally and conceptually. The myths of Plato I revisit below allow us to 'come at ecological issues from an oblique angle'.<sup>63</sup> Herein lies the kinship between myth and phenomenology: a phenomenological approach leads to 'a perspective which can no longer be integrated into the everyday world, whilst simultaneously opening up the facts and circumstances of the everyday world in an intensified way'.<sup>64</sup>

In what follows, I recount two Platonic myths—one of caves, another of swamps—as 'geographical myths' par excellence.<sup>65</sup> These myths, I argue, can help us educate our vision in a way that makes us 'see' climate, re-creating the concept of *hora* or phenomenological climate. I then turn to a later Platonic dialogue, *Philebus*, in order to develop an ontological account of said phenomenological climate.

<sup>43</sup> Essebo, A mythical place, 519.

<sup>44</sup> Essebo, A mythical place, 515.

<sup>45</sup> Essebo, A mythical place, 515.

<sup>46</sup> Essebo, A mythical place, 516.

<sup>47</sup> Essebo, A mythical place, 518; G. Olsson, The dialectics of spatial analysis, *Antipode* 6 (1974).

<sup>48</sup> Essebo, A mythical place, 515.

<sup>49</sup> Essebo, A mythical place, 520.

<sup>50</sup> Essebo, A mythical place, 520; see also B. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship*, Chicago, IL, 1999.

<sup>51</sup> For a comprehensive discussion on the role of myth in Plato, see also Collobert, Destrée and Gonzalez (Eds.), *Plato and Myth. Studies on the use and status of platonic myths*, Leiden/Boston, 2012.

<sup>52</sup> M. Dixsaut, Myth and Interpretation, in: C. Collobert, P. Destrée and F.J. Gonzalez (Eds.), *Plato and Myth. Studies on the use and status of platonic myths*, Leiden/Boston, 2012, 28; C. Collobert, The platonic art of myth-making: myth as informative phantasma, in: C. Collobert, P. Destrée and F.J. Gonzalez (Eds.), *Plato and Myth. Studies on the use and status of platonic myths*, Leiden/Boston, 2012, 87.

<sup>53</sup> G.W. Most, Plato's exoteric myths, in: C. Collobert, P. Destrée and F.J. Gonzalez (Eds.), *Plato and Myth. Studies on the use and status of platonic myths*, Leiden/Boston, 2012, 23.

<sup>54</sup> Dixsaut, Myth and Interpretation, 34, emphasis mine.

<sup>55</sup> T. Ingold, The temporality of the landscape, *World archaeology* 25 (1993), 171.

<sup>56</sup> Dixsaut, Myth and Interpretation, 40.

<sup>57</sup> Collobert, The platonic art of myth-making, 108.

<sup>58</sup> Dixsaut, Myth and Interpretation, 45.

<sup>59</sup> Dixsaut, Myth and Interpretation, 46, emphasis mine.

<sup>60</sup> Collobert, The platonic art of myth-making, 98.

<sup>61</sup> Figal, Modelle und Intensitätsgrade, 671, translation mine.

<sup>62</sup> Collobert, The platonic art of myth-making, 105.

<sup>63</sup> N. Starosielski, The Elements of Media Studies, *Media + Environment* 1 (2019), 2.

<sup>64</sup> Figal, Modelle und Intensitätsgrade, 676, translation mine.

<sup>65</sup> Essebo, A mythical place, 526.



*'It's a strange image you're describing, and strange prisoners'*

Of all the myths Socrates recounts in Plato's dialogues, the so-called 'allegory of the cave' demonstrates the 'narrowness of our vision' most clearly.<sup>66</sup> As Dixsaut notes, this 'myth is meant to persuade us to turn our heads around, to get up and leave.'<sup>67</sup>

Of course, the myth does not literally ask us to get up, leave, and go somewhere else. Rather, the myth distorts reality in such a way as to make us aware of how our everyday perception and experience is itself distorted in particular ways which generally go unnoticed. The myth can thus serve as a particular critique of ocularcentrism<sup>68</sup>: the allegory of the cave inquires critically into our over-reliance on our sense of sight, into the apparent self-evident nature of vision and its objects.

The cave, as Socrates describes it in the dialogue, is home to cave-dwellers, shackled in such a way that they can neither move nor turn their heads.<sup>69</sup> Instead, they are forced to look at one wall of the cave in front of them, where all they see are shadows, projected onto the wall by a fire behind them, in front of which different objects are carried. Outside this cave, in broad daylight, lies true reality.

The story Socrates goes on to tell about this cave is a story of the dialectic between light and dark, brightness and shadows which characterises both knowledge and understanding. The cave-dwellers' reliance on vision, however, makes this dialectic a painful one. As soon as those imprisoned are able to look toward the light, their shackles loosened, they are 'pained and dazzled and unable to see the things whose shadows [they'd] seen before.'<sup>70</sup> Outside of their experiential comfort-zone, their experience turns utterly alien. Instead of proverbially 'seeing the light', they 'turn around and flee towards the things [they are] able to see',<sup>71</sup> namely shadows.

What is required to understand the set-up of the cave, the relationship between objects and their representations, Socrates explains, is some time for *adjustment*.<sup>72</sup> Adaptation, the visual physiological process by which our eyes adjust to lighting, here stands in for the epistemological dialectic between light and shadow.

What becomes known through this process of adjustment or adaptation is, I argue, not some new object of perception which is now visible 'in broad daylight' (although such objects play a role in the allegory). Rather, what becomes known is the *process* by which our perception of objects is *mediated*; we become aware of the (material and conceptual) space *between* us and the objects we see. This 'space of illumination' itself cannot be seen, but is rather that through which we see, which affords visibility itself.

This space takes on different shapes in the allegory of the cave, which are addressed as the cave-dweller adjusts to the light outside, having left the cave at the apex of their epistemological journey. To adjust to the true light outside, the cave-dweller must

transition between different media of illumination with their corresponding degrees of clarity.

At first, he'd see shadows most easily, then images of men and other things *in water*, then the things themselves. Of these, he'd be able to study the things *in the sky* and the sky itself more easily at night, looking at the light of the stars and the moon, than during the day, looking at the sun and the light of the sun. [...] Finally, I suppose, he'd be able to see the sun, not images of it in water or some alien place, but *the sun itself*, in its own place, and be able to study it.<sup>73</sup>

What spurs on the transition from shadows, to water, to sky is the realisation that the perception of different objects is mediated and hence, in Socrates' reasoning, distorted. Being able to see the sun unmediated is the final step in escaping distorted perception, which began with the chains shackling the cave-dwellers in place.<sup>74</sup> Having completed the process of adjustment/adaptation, the cave-dweller

would infer and conclude that the sun provides the seasons and the years, governs everything in the visible world, and is in some way the cause of all the things that he used to see.<sup>75</sup>

For the task of understanding experiences of climate and its changes, I suggest stopping one step short of completing the allegory as laid out by Plato. Instead of turning to the sun, the celestial source of light, I focus instead on the media of illumination traversed in this myth. As I argued above, adjustment to and understanding of such media is prerequisite for understanding the epistemological situation Plato describes at all; else, the sun would simply pain and dazzle us.

The allegory concludes with the passage of time, with the sun providing the seasons and years. Herein lies a key difference between *klima* and *hora*: whereas climate in the former sense denotes the *spatial* distribution of climatic zones across the earth's surface (according to its inclination), climate in the later sense denotes the *temporal* cycle of the characteristic weather of a given place. The phenomenological climate-concept *hora* I am re-creating does not refer to the individual seasons, but to seasonality itself: the distinct shapes weather can take, 'the thickness of climate-time.'<sup>76</sup> Seasonality, the characteristic shape of weather, is not experienced as an object of perception: it is the medium governing 'everything in the visible world'.<sup>77</sup> It is to this end that I introduced the allegory of the cave above: to make this process of mediation visible, to look at it from an oblique angle.

*'At the edge of the air'*

Plato gives an account of the role of seasons as media of experience and knowledge in a geographical myth Socrates recounts in *Phaedo*; what one might call Plato's 'allegory of the swamp'.<sup>78</sup> This myth combines, as Friedländer notes, the 'geophysical sublayer' with a 'mythic-metaphysical top layer'; in Socrates retelling, the

<sup>66</sup> Dixsaut, *Myth and Interpretation*, 46.

<sup>67</sup> Dixsaut, *Myth and Interpretation*, 42.

<sup>68</sup> M. Jay, *Scopic Regimes of Modernity*, in: H. Foster (Ed.), *Vision and visibility*, Seattle, WA, 1988; B. Stonehill, 'The Debate over "Ocularcentrism"', *Journal of Communication* 45 (1995); for accounts and critiques of ocularcentrism in Human Geography, see also D. Bissell, 'Visualising everyday geographies: practices of vision through travel-time', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 34 (2009); D.E. Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye*, Baltimore, MA, 2003; C. Nash, 'Reclaiming Vision: Looking at landscape and the body', *Gender, Place & Culture* 3 (1996); E. Roberts, 'Geography and the visual image: A hauntological approach', *Progress in Human Geography* 37 (2013); Y.-F. Tuan, 'Sight and Pictures', *Geographical Review* 69 (1979).

<sup>69</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, VII, 514a-517d.

<sup>70</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, VII, 515c.

<sup>71</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, VII, 515e.

<sup>72</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, VII, 516a.

<sup>73</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, VII, 516a-b, emphasis mine.

<sup>74</sup> The composition of the myth allows us to look at the conclusion Socrates reaches from an oblique angle as well: even if we were able to see the sun itself, we would still be looking *through* the sky.

<sup>75</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, VII, 516b-c.

<sup>76</sup> Neimanis and Walker, *Weathering*, 561.

<sup>77</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, VII, 516b-c.

<sup>78</sup> On the similarities between the allegory of the cave and Socrates' account in *Phaedo*, see also P. Friedländer, *Platon als Geograph*, in: P. Friedländer (Ed.), *Platon. Band 1. Seinswahrheit und Lebenswirklichkeit*, Berlin, 1954, 262-263.

physical and conceptual geographies of perception and experience become intertwined.<sup>79</sup>

At the end of *Phaedo*, Socrates gives a detailed description of 'what [he is] convinced is the shape of the earth and what its regions are.'<sup>80</sup>

Further, the earth is very large, and we live around the sea in a small portion of it between Phasis and the pillars of Heracles, like ants or frogs around a swamp; many other peoples live in many such parts of it. Everywhere about the earth there are numerous hollows of many kinds and shapes and sizes into which the water and the mist and the air have gathered. The earth itself is pure and lies in the pure sky where the stars are situated, which the majority of those who discourse on these subjects call the ether. The water and mist and air are the sediment of the ether and they always flow into the hollows of the earth. We, who dwell in the hollows of it, are unaware of this and we think that we live above, on the surface of the earth. It is as if someone who lived deep down in the middle of the ocean thought he was living on its surface. Seeing the sun and the other heavenly bodies through the water, he would think the sea to be the sky; because he is slow and weak, he has never reached the surface of the sea or risen with his head above the water or come out of the sea to our region here, nor seen how much purer and more beautiful it is than his own region, nor has he ever heard of it from anyone who has seen it.

Our experience is the same: living in a certain hollow of the earth, we believe that we live upon its surface; the air we call the heavens, as if the stars made their way through it; this too is the same: because of our weakness and slowness we are not able to make our way to the upper limit of the air; if anyone got to this upper limit, if anyone came to it or reached it on wings and his head rose above it, then just as fish on rising from the sea see things in our region, he would see things there and, if his nature could endure to contemplate them, he would know that there is the true heaven, the true light and the true earth, for the earth here, these stones and the whole region, are spoiled and eaten away, just as things in the sea are by the salt water. [...]

There are many other living creatures upon the earth, and also men, some living inland, others at the edge of the air, as we live on the edge of the sea, others again live on islands surrounded by air close to the mainland. In a word, what water and the sea are to us, the air is to them and the ether is to them what the air is to us. The climate [*horas/ώρας*] is such that they are without disease, and they live much longer than people do here; their eyesight, hearing and intelligence and all such are as superior to ours as air is superior to water and ether to air in purity; [...] they see the sun and moon and stars as they are, and in other ways their happiness is in accord with this.<sup>81</sup>

Socrates' account of the Earth's cavities filled with media of different density (salt water, swamp air, ether) offers an alternate telling of the allegory of the cave where the media of experience are foregrounded; the perspective shifting further

<sup>79</sup> Friedländer, *Platon als Geograph*, 263, translation mine. Apart from elucidating the role of media of perception, the myth recounted in *Phaedo* develops a 'geography of dying and coming-back-to-life' (E. Pender, *The Rivers of Tartarus: Plato's Geography of Dying and Coming-back-to-Life*, in: C. Collobert, P. Destrée and F.J. Gonzalez (Eds.), *Plato and Myth. Studies on the use and status of platonic myths*, Leiden/Boston, 2012, 202). The myth offers the 'topographical basis' for Plato's 'image of the afterlife' (Friedländer, *Platon als Geograph*, 266).

<sup>80</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, 108e.

<sup>81</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, 109a-111c.

Once more, the deeper one finds oneself, the more distorted one's perception is. Analogising life under water with life above ground powerfully highlights the inconspicuous nature of media of experience; we do not generally notice the media in which we dwell. As Fleming and Jankovic note, although the 'noosphere', the 'layer of air within two meters of the ground', is '[d]eeply significant for all human transactions, this layer remains out of sight, its very proximity rendering it invisible.'<sup>82</sup> The ocean then functions as an 'anti-appartus' or 'anti-environment' through which our own environmental media turn conspicuous.<sup>83</sup>

Although the sun (and the moon and the stars) once more play a part in this account, Socrates places greater emphasis on the medium which allows one to see the sun instead of distorting experience: ether, the 'purer element'.<sup>84</sup> From this (for us) impossible vantage point, Socrates looks back at us swamp dwellers from a celestial 'amphibious perspective' as we do at the fish, dwelling at the *edge of the air* instead of the edge of the sea.<sup>85</sup>

Reemphasising the allegorical nature of this account of Earth, dwelling at the edge of the air is not so much a literal vantage point we could assume, but an epistemological one; this 'vantage point is a place that is not of this world, and not of any world'.<sup>86</sup>

Thinking from the edge of the air, we reflect on the media through which we experience, much in the same way as looking into water literally allows us to see a different medium. As we cannot break through the air's surface, in Socrates' model, we are unable to look down or sideways at our media of experience.<sup>87</sup>

Instead, bringing to light the nature of media of experience requires us to 'see differently', as the myth Socrates recounts instructs us to do. The distortion of different media of experience, detailed in the myth, then translates into a distortion of our own experiential reality, whereby the inconspicuous medium of experience turns conspicuous.

The medium that turns conspicuous in this swamp myth is the *climate (hora)*. The different climates Socrates identifies are not experienced as objects of perception, but through differences in health, in 'eyesight, hearing and intelligence'.<sup>88</sup> Media of experience here do not turn conspicuous by leaving one medium in favour of another, as in the allegory of the cave, but by reflecting on how experience is shaped by media.

Climate, I argue, is not something we can look at but is more akin to a *medium* of experience. Climate is that *in which* we experience and which consequently shapes experience. To look at climate one would have to look at it from the edge of the air. From the vantage point of everyday life, however, climate is everywhere. To say that climate is invisible or nowhere would be akin to saying, in Socrates' model, that the water fish swim in is invisible and nowhere. To 'see' climate, one must become aware of the (material and conceptual) space *between* us and the objects we see.

What appears to interest Plato with respect to climate, as I detail in the next section, is the order it brings to the potential chaos of weather. The myth recounted in *Phaedo* highlights that Plato does

<sup>82</sup> Fleming and Jankovic, *Revisiting Klima*, 4; on the inconspicuousness of air, see also Horn, *Air as Medium*; S. Connor, *The Matter of Air. Science and Art of the Ethereal*, London, 2010.

<sup>83</sup> J.D. Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds. Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media*, Chicago, IL, 2015, 55; M. McLuhan and Fiore Q., *War and Peace in the Global Village*, New York, NY, 1968, 175; M. Jue, *Wild Blue Media*, Durham, NC, 2020, 90.

<sup>84</sup> P. Friedländer, *Platon. Band 1. Seinswahrheit und Lebenswirklichkeit*, Berlin, 1954, 269, translation mine.

<sup>85</sup> Jue, *Wild Blue Media*, 5.

<sup>86</sup> Dixsaut, *Myth and Interpretation*, 41.

<sup>87</sup> On seeing Earth and climate from outer space, see also C. Russill, *Is the Earth a Medium? Situating the Planetary in Media Theory, Ctrl-Z: New Media Philosophy 7* (2017).

<sup>88</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, 111b.

not appear to be interested in how *individual* seasons shape our experience through their changes, but rather how the *totality* of seasons, seasonality itself changes with varying climates.

The work the different seasons do, as Socrates explains in his etymological account of *horai* in Plato's dialogue *Cratylus*, is to 'distinguish or mark off one thing from another'.<sup>89</sup> Seasons 'distinguish (*horizein*) the weathers of winter and summer, the winds, and the fruits of the earth.'<sup>90</sup> Taken as a whole, climate is a distinctive weather shaped by a particular seasonality.<sup>91</sup> Climates take shape in time, but change through space.

### Making climate legible

Such a view of climate, as something which mediates potentially unbounded weather into something regular and ordered takes me deeper in Plato's broader ontological project. To account for climate, I here focus on Plato's dialogue *Philebus*.

The *Philebus* centres around the question of which life is truly good: living for pleasure or living for knowledge. To sort this question, Socrates reflects on how pleasure can at once be *multiple*, i.e. many different things are pleasurable in different ways, and *one*, i.e. pleasure somehow encompasses this heterogeneity. This leads Socrates to wonder:

It is this principle that has turned up here, which somehow has an amazing nature. For that *the many are one and the one many* are amazing statements, and can easily be disputed, whichever side of the two one may want to defend.<sup>92</sup>

Socrates goes on to identify a danger that results from the apparent polarity between one and many.

By making the point that it is *through discourse* that the same thing flits around, becoming one and many in all sorts of ways, in whatever it may be that is said at any time, both long ago and now. And this will never come to an end, nor has it just begun, but it seems to me that this is an '*immortal and ageless*' condition that comes to us with discourse.<sup>93</sup>

Socrates here recounts the basic fact that the very act of trying to distinguish things from one another through language (or discourse) leads to perpetual argument over which things are to be called by the same name (are one) and which things are distinct from each other (are many). The temptation of language to either draw together or differentiate leads one, according to Socrates, to 'omit the intermediates'; what is one *and* many.<sup>94</sup>

Using the example of language (and a myth about the Ancient Egyptian deity Theuth), Socrates shows how literacy is equivalent to successfully identifying said intermediates.<sup>95</sup> On a basic phonetic level, being able to speak requires being able to identify and use vowels and consonants in a consistent manner, that is to identify a distinct number of sounds (the many) from the unlimited

possibility of sound we can vocalise (the one) through which language becomes comprehensible.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, Socrates argues, a knowledge of music requires identifying distinct harmonies which give a musical piece its shape or 'meaning'.<sup>97</sup> Intermediates—vowels, consonants and harmonies—result from limiting the unlimited or, as Socrates goes on to argue, from mixing the limited and unlimited.<sup>98</sup>

Socrates next example of the unlimited is *temperature*, or 'the hotter and the colder'.<sup>99</sup> According to Socrates, temperature would simply vanish were it to assume a 'definite quality'; be limited.<sup>100</sup> Experientially, this is borne out whenever we measure temperature. There is an unbridgeable gap between the temperature we experience in distinctive vagueness and the definite number on a thermometer. Just as the phonetics of a language or the harmonics of music result from limiting the unlimited in distinct ways, so too, Socrates explains, limit taking away the 'excesses and unlimitedness' of 'frost and heat [ ... ] establishes moderation and harmony'.<sup>101</sup> As a result of the mixing of the unlimited (temperature, humidity, etc.) with the limited we are '*blessed with seasons*'.<sup>102</sup>

### Articulating climate

Plato's ontological account of how the limited and unlimited mix to give weather its distinctive shape provides the basis for a phenomenological account of climate and its changes. Conceptualising climate as the result of measurement or a computer-modelled object would mean limiting climate's nature to a limited entity. Trying to grasp climate in the flux of weather in turn risks being overwhelmed by the unlimited nature of climate's meteorological elements (temperature, humidity, etc.).

Looking at experiences of climate from an oblique angle means conceptualising climate as a mixture of the limited and unlimited, as *the seasonal shape weather takes*. The intermediates that result from this mixing are the individual seasons, just as vowels, consonants and harmonies result from mixing the limited and unlimited in the case of language and music. Taking this ontological analogy further, just as language describes the totality of combinations of vowels and consonants, so too does climate describe particular combinations of atmospheric properties. Just as one might anticipate the progression of a certain piece of music through an understanding of harmony, one can anticipate weather once one has become literate in the climate one finds oneself in, becoming attentive to 'the cyclical style or mood of the weather'.<sup>103</sup> Following an account Figal gives of the intensity of certain phenomena, climate 'is neither unproblematic unity nor chaotic multiplicity, neither definite structure nor ambiguous tangle'.<sup>104</sup> Rather, climate 'is characterised in itself by a tension, by an intensity'.<sup>105</sup>

Climate 'as a normalising idea offers humans a certain sense of security; it allows them to 'put weather in its place' so to speak'.<sup>106</sup> But climate is more than an (abstract) idea, it has an 'outside'

<sup>89</sup> Plato, *Cratylus*, 410c.

<sup>90</sup> Plato, *Cratylus*, 410c.

<sup>91</sup> See also J. Knebusch, Art and climate (change) perception: Outline of a phenomenology of climate, *OLATS*, 2008, <<http://archive.olats.org/fcm/artclimat/phenomenologyclimate.pdf>> last accessed 10/01/2021; C.O. Sauer, The Morphology of Landscape, *University of California Publications in Geography* 2 (1925), 39–40.

<sup>92</sup> Plato, *Philebus*, in: J.M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Eds.), *Complete works*, Indianapolis, 1997, 14c, emphasis mine.

<sup>93</sup> Plato, *Philebus*, 15d, emphasis mine.

<sup>94</sup> Plato, *Philebus*, 17a.

<sup>95</sup> Plato, *Philebus*, 17b.

<sup>96</sup> Plato, *Philebus*, 18b-d.

<sup>97</sup> Plato, *Philebus*, 17d-e.

<sup>98</sup> Plato, *Philebus*, 23c-e.

<sup>99</sup> Plato, *Philebus*, 24a.

<sup>100</sup> Plato, *Philebus*, 24c.

<sup>101</sup> Plato, *Philebus*, 24c.

<sup>102</sup> Plato, *Philebus*, 26b, emphasis mine.

<sup>103</sup> R. Kirkman, A Little Knowledge of Dangerous Things: Human Vulnerability in a Changing Climate, in: S.L. Cataldi and W.S. Hamrick (Eds.), *Merleau-Ponty and Environmental Philosophy*, Albany, NY, 2007, 27.

<sup>104</sup> Figal, *Modelle und Intensitätsgrade*, 672, translation mine.

<sup>105</sup> Figal, *Modelle und Intensitätsgrade*, 672, translation mine.

<sup>106</sup> M. Hulme, Climate, Living Lexicon for the Environmental Humanities, *Environmental Humanities* 6 (2015), 177.

reality. It is through an understanding of climate that the topography, vegetation, weather, and human culture (housing, clothing, food, etc.) of a given area become (more easily) legible.<sup>107</sup> Similar to both language and music, the individual elements of climate (temperature, precipitation, etc.) do not make sense in isolation; they acquire meaning through their interrelation and duration. To adapt to a given climate means to grasp the grammar of weather in much the same way that speaking well requires us to learn the grammar of language.<sup>108</sup>

Consequently, changes in climate are not simply experienced as a change in some physical property of the atmosphere or as isolated events. Changes in climate are akin to changes in the grammar of weather, and by extension the grammar of ways of life. Changes in climate mean changes to the comprehensibility of the world.

The alienation or solastalgia felt in the face of climate change is, viewed through the ontological account offered by Plato, akin to a nightmare where our closest friends and family speak in a language we no longer understand. Highlighting the nature of alienation when hearing a foreign language, Waldenfels explains that

Whoever hears someone speaking in a foreign language that they themselves do not speak, hears what they do not understand and at the same time notices that they do not understand it. Something reveals itself by eluding them.<sup>109</sup>

Following Plato's account, experiences of climate are not only experiences of a stabilising force between nature and culture. In experiencing climate change, one both notices weather one does not understand and notices that one does not understand it. Climate change reveals itself as a phenomenon by new climates eluding immediate comprehension, as old climates (and their corresponding ways of life) turn ephemeral.

### (De-)territorializing weather and climate

Having (re-)created a phenomenological concept of climate, I now situate my account in contemporary debates in anthropology, cultural studies, and landscape research on the relationship between weather, seasons, and climate in experience to draw out what a phenomenological account of climate(-change) responds to, namely attempts to distinguish weather we can experience from climate we cannot.

Starting with anthropology, Ingold offers a systematic account of how weather is experienced phenomenologically in his work on weather-worlds (another example of concept-creation).<sup>110</sup> In his discussion of the 'visual perception of the weather', Ingold highlights two key difficulties in accounting for how we feel the weather: (i) experiences of weather are 'invariably multisensory' and (ii) there is no 'thing' called weather we can point to, 'weather

is not really an object of perception at all.'<sup>111</sup> Hence *locating* weather turns out to be a key difficulty, both concerning how weather is given in experience and what the object of weather-experience even is. This becomes evident in the very grammar we use to describe the weather.<sup>112</sup>

To locate weather in experience, Ingold considers the differences in perceptions of landscape and weather. Landscape, according to Ingold, is perceived through surfaces; we see, hear, and touch 'things'.<sup>113</sup> Weather, conversely, is experienced as a *medium* of experience: we do not experience 'objects' of weather, but light, sound, and feeling themselves as we are weathered.<sup>114</sup> This leads Ingold to conclude that perceiving landscape is a 'mode of observation', whereas 'perceiving the weather is a mode of being'.<sup>115</sup>

To experience weather, then, means to experience the very capacities through which we experience ourselves: Changes in weather (in sunshine, rain, wind, etc.) underwrite 'our capacities respectively – to see [sunshine], hear [rain], and touch [wind]'.<sup>116</sup> As

weather changes we do not see different things, but we do see the same things differently. [...] Strictly speaking, the weather is not what we have a perception of; it is rather what we perceive in. For if weather is an experience of light, then to see in the light is to see in the weather. It is not so much an object as a medium of perception.<sup>117</sup>

Given Ingold's phenomenological approach to weather, which results in an account of weather as a medium of experience, one might expect he shares a similar phenomenological approach to climate as the one I outlined in the first section. Turning to his work, co-authored with Kurttila, on 'perceiving the environment in Finnish Lapland' reveals something different and, perhaps, surprising:

We were particularly concerned whether, or in what respects, the environment is perceived to have changed—at least within living memory—and whether these changes could be linked to wider processes of climatic change as 'scientifically' monitored and recorded by meteorological stations in the region. [...] Our efforts, however, were frustrated by the realization, in the course of carrying out the project, that environmental scientists and local Sami people were talking about quite different things. In a nutshell, whereas the scientists were out to detect changes in *climate*, what mattered to local people were changes in *weather*. Climate is an abstraction compounded from a number of variables (temperature, precipitation, air pressure, wind-speed, etc.) that are isolated for purposes of measurement. Weather, by contrast, is about what it feels like to be warm or

<sup>107</sup> Watsuji, *A climate*; D.W. Johnson, *Watsuji on nature: Japanese philosophy in the wake of Heidegger*, Evanston, IL, 2019.

<sup>108</sup> On a hermeneutics of climate, see also Livingstone, *Tropical Hermeneutics*.

<sup>109</sup> B. Waldenfels, *Topographie des Fremden*, Frankfurt a.M., 1997, 9, translation mine.

<sup>110</sup> T. Ingold, The eye of the storm: visual perception and the weather, *Visual Studies* 20 (2005); Ingold, Earth, sky, wind, and weather; T. Ingold, Footprints through the weather-world: walking, breathing, knowing, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16 (2010); P. Vannini et al., Making Sense of the Weather: Dwelling and Weathering on Canada's Rain Coast, *Space and Culture* 15 (2012); V. Colapietro, The Weather World of Human Experience, *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 29 (2015); Barry, Borovnik and Edensor (Eds.), *Weather: Spaces, Mobilities and Affects*, London, 2020; E. de Vet and L. Head, Everyday weather-ways: Negotiating the temporalities of home and work in Melbourne, Australia, *Geoforum* 108 (2020); Böhme and Schiemann (Eds.), *Phänomenologie der Natur*, Frankfurt a.M., 1997; G. Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, New York, 2016.

<sup>111</sup> Ingold, The eye of the storm: visual perception and the weather, 97.

<sup>112</sup> T.H. Ford, Romantic Poetry and the Grammar of Weather: British Romantic Writing and Environmental Catastrophe, *British Romantic Writing and Environmental Catastrophe*, 2017, <<https://romanticcatastrophe.leeds.ac.uk/2017/07/18/romantic-poetry-and-the-grammar-of-weather/>> last accessed 22 Jun/2020; A.-L. François, Unspeakable Weather, or the Rain Romantic Constatives Know, in: R.S. Kawashima, G. Philippe and T. Sowley (Eds.), *Phantom Sentences: Essays in linguistics and literature presented to Ann Banfield*, New York, NY, 2008.

<sup>113</sup> Ingold, The eye of the storm: visual perception and the weather, 102; for a critique of Ingold's account of landscape as object of observation, see also J. Wylie, Depths and Folds: On Landscape and the Gazing Subject, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24 (2006).

<sup>114</sup> Ingold, The eye of the storm: visual perception and the weather, 102.

<sup>115</sup> Ingold, The eye of the storm: visual perception and the weather, 102.

<sup>116</sup> Ingold, Earth, sky, wind, and weather, S30.

<sup>117</sup> Ingold, The eye of the storm: visual perception and the weather, 102.



cold, drenched in rain, caught in a storm and so on. In short, climate is recorded, weather experienced.<sup>118</sup>

Unpacking this explanation of the differences between weather and climate, Ingold and Kurttila reassert what Horn has called the 'externalization of climate'.<sup>119</sup> If climate is defined as 'an abstraction compounded from a number of variables', then it is clear why climate—so defined—might not have mattered to the local people.

This definition of climate, along with the very distinction between weather and climate, becomes more difficult to uphold with the onset of rapid anthropogenic climate change. Voicing concern about weather due to climate change does not mean being concerned about sudden changes in the weather we momentarily experience. Such changes belong to the very nature of weather. Of concern are changes in the very character of the weather of a given place, weather being out-of-sync with what one has come to expect, namely 'seasonal normality'.<sup>120</sup> With regards to seasons, Ingold and Kurttila go on to explain that

Crucial to people's experiences of the weather in the far north is the cycle of the seasons. As a phenomenon of climate, seasonality may be registered in the form of regular annual fluctuations in temperature, precipitation and daylight hours, without regard to the lives of plants, animals or human beings. But as a phenomenon of weather, seasonality inheres in the relations between concurrent rhythms of growth and movement of plants and animals, and of human social life. [...] [S]easonal variations are experienced as the interweaving, in a complex counterpoint, of changing harmonies of light, darkness and colour, of freezing and thawing, of cycles of life and death, of the migratory movements of birds and of human activities of production [...] and consumption [...]. It is consistent with this understanding of seasonality as a system of rhythmic interrelationships that in recounting their more memorable experiences of the weather, people tend to focus on rhythmic dislocations and the anomalous conjunctions that ensued.<sup>121</sup>

The concept of phenomenological climate developed above calls into question the dichotomy between seasonality as a 'phenomenon of climate' and a 'phenomenon of weather'.

The difference between climate and weather cannot come down to one being measured and the other experienced. From the scientist's point of view, both weather and climate can become objects of measurement and externalization. As Ingold's account of weather-worlds shows, a quantitative approach to weather would occlude weather's nature as a medium of experience and existence. Equally, a quantitative approach to climate—measuring, recording, modelling climate—would occlude climate's phenomenological reality; something Humboldt reminds us of in his definition of climate as something 'which sensibly affect[s] our organs'.<sup>122</sup>

To better make sense of the different phenomenologies of weather and climate, I turn to Horn's account of 'heterodox forms of [climate] knowledge' and distinguish between weather and climate on the (phenomenological) grounds that one is a 'daily singularity',

whereas the other is a 'temporal cycle'.<sup>123</sup> Although both weather and climate are, according to Ingold and Horn respectively, media of experience, they take place on different temporal scales.<sup>124</sup> As I argued in the previous section, climate coheres weather in distinctive shapes. Experiencing climate means experiencing the 'system of rhythmic interrelationships' of a given place. It is for this reason that we do not mistake a change in weather (the sudden onset of rain) for a change in climate (leaving one climate for another). Changes in climate, such as when we move to another place, entail changes to whole ways of life that changes in weather do not. In Horn's words, climate 'involves a territorializing principle of place, of environment, of a culture's situatedness in nature and nature's gentle force within culture, a sense of seasonal cycles, of repetition and stability'.<sup>125</sup> Weather, on the other hand, 'refers to a deterritorializing principle of planetary dynamics and forces, of unsteadiness and singularity'.<sup>126</sup>

The difference between deterritorializing and territorializing aspects of atmospheric processes bears out in research on the cyclical, seasonal, and temporal coherence of landscapes, on how landscapes change and hold new meaning with time.<sup>127</sup>

Brassley introduces the concept of 'ephemeral landscapes' to describe non-permanent changes, and highlights weather as one example of natural 'landscape ephemera'.<sup>128</sup> Brassley goes on to further distinguish between 'anticipated ephemera', such as seasonal changes in weather, and 'unanticipated ephemeral change, produced by short-term variations in the weather'.<sup>129</sup> One phenomenological cue Brassley highlights to distinguish between both is how unanticipated ephemera arrest our attention in a way cyclical seasonal changes do not.<sup>130</sup>

Responding to Brassley, Jones argues that seasonal landscapes are not ephemeral at all. Jones traces the etymology of seasons back to the Latin word for sowing [*satio*] and highlights how '[a]gricultural seasons are closely tied to the seasonal rhythms of the climate'.<sup>131</sup> Introducing a different typology, Jones suggests we differentiate between *ephemeral* landscapes, with their irregular weather, and *seasonal* landscapes characterised by rhythm.<sup>132</sup> Once more, weather's ephemerality deterritorialises, climate's seasonality territorialises.

## Conclusion: the phenomenology of climate and its changes

I have developed a phenomenological account of climate and its changes in order to help make sense of *what* changes with climate change. Climate change must be distinguishable from usual changes in (everyday) weather and changes in season. In climate

<sup>124</sup> On temporality and environmental change, see also the special issue accompanying T. Edensor, L. Head and U. Kothari, Time, temporality and environmental change, *Geoforum* 108 (2020); Edensor (Ed.), *Geographies of rhythm: nature, place, mobilities and bodies*, Farnham/Burlington, VT, 2010.

<sup>125</sup> Horn, *Air as Medium*, 13, emphasis mine; on the question of climate (in-)determinism, see also Horn, *Air as Medium*, 11–12; M. Hulme, Reducing the future to climate: a story of climate determinism and reductionism, *Osiris* 26 (2011); D.N. Livingstone, Environmental Determinism, in: J.A. Agnew and D.N. Livingstone (Eds.), London, 2011.

<sup>126</sup> Horn, *Air as Medium*, 13, emphasis mine.

<sup>127</sup> H. Palang et al., Editorial: Landscape and Seasonality—Seasonal Landscapes, *Landscape Research* 30 (2005); Ingold, The temporality of the landscape.

<sup>128</sup> P. Brassley, On the unrecognized significance of the ephemeral landscape, *Landscape Research* 23 (1998), 120.

<sup>129</sup> Brassley, On the unrecognized significance of the ephemeral landscape, 121.

<sup>130</sup> Brassley, On the unrecognized significance of the ephemeral landscape, 121.

<sup>131</sup> M. Jones, Seasonality and Landscape in Northern Europe: An Introductory Exploration, in: H. Palang, H. Sooväli and A. Printsman (Eds.), *Seasonal Landscapes*, Dordrecht, 2007, 19.

<sup>132</sup> Jones, Seasonality and Landscape in Northern Europe: An Introductory Exploration, 21.

<sup>118</sup> T. Ingold and T. Kurttila, Perceiving the environment in Finnish Lapland, *Body & Society* 6 (2000), 187.

<sup>119</sup> Horn, *Air as Medium*, 15.

<sup>120</sup> Ingold and Kurttila, Perceiving the environment in Finnish Lapland, 187.

<sup>121</sup> Ingold and Kurttila, Perceiving the environment in Finnish Lapland, 190.

<sup>122</sup> A.V. Humboldt, *Cosmos: A sketch of a physical description of the universe*, London, 1849, 323–324; B. Schneider, *Klimabilder: eine Genealogie globaler Bildpolitiken von Klima und Klimawandel*, Berlin, 2018.

<sup>123</sup> Horn, *Air as Medium*, 17–18.

change the very 'system of rhythmic interrelationships', on which any understanding of weather and seasons as 'usual' or 'unusual' depends, becomes undone. In climate change one inhabits, in Malm's words, 'the diachronic, the discordant, the inchoate' because with a change in climate, the very medium of existence changes: the ways one has come to live in a given climate stop making sense.<sup>133</sup> To experience climate change means to experience 'temporal dissonance [...] defined by struggles and negotiations that derive from new or uncertain answers to the two basic questions that mark anticipatory culture (What is next? Now what?)'.<sup>134</sup>

To be experiencing this is something different, I argue with Plato, than to experience a change in weather. It is important to be able to make this difference legible to understand what is changing with climate change. Returning to the debate between Brassley and Jones, climate change undoes the difference between the ephemeral and seasonal. As an ephemeral change, extreme weather arrests our attention, signalling lasting climatological change and shredding the conceptual fabric through which (concrete) weather and (abstract) climate are kept apart.<sup>135</sup> Old climates, to which one had adapted, turn ephemeral as new climates begin to re-territorialize ways of life.

In light of anthropogenic climate change, the concept of climate does not become obsolete, as a cultural understanding of climate discussed in the introduction might suggest. Instead, experiences of climate intensify as climates change. Climate's territorializing power no longer fades into the background of centuries of adaptation

but is acutely felt as one is forced to make sense of new weather and corresponding ways of life. This experience is, evidently, asynchronous; it is not a single moment in time shared globally. The temporality of climate change is, as Whyte shows, embedded in a deeper historical context, namely colonialism.<sup>136</sup> Experiences of climate change extend further back in time than the current moment of awareness of climate crisis, accompanied by "a chronos of self-actualization."<sup>137</sup> To help make sense of these different experiences, climate must not only be understood scientifically and culturally, but phenomenologically. The approach outlined above draws Ancient Greek philosophy into the debate around the nature of climate and its changes, opening up new avenues of research for historical geography.

#### Declaration of competing interest

The author discloses receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the Cambridge Arts and Humanities Research Council Doctoral Training Partnership (AHRC DTP) and the Cambridge Trust.

#### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mike Hulme, Friederike Hartz, Noam Obermeister, and David Durand-Delacre for their support and encouragement.

<sup>133</sup> A. Malm, *The progress of this storm: nature and society in a warming world*, London/New York, 2018, 15.

<sup>134</sup> Z. Baker, Anticipatory Culture in the Bering Sea: Weather, Climate and Temporal Dissonance, *Weather, Climate, and Society* (2021), 84.

<sup>135</sup> S. Jasanoff, A new climate for society, *Theory, Culture and Society* 27 (2010), 237; C. Simonetti, Weathering climate: telescoping change, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 25 (2019), 243; A. Neimanis and J.M. Hamilton, weathering, *Feminist Review* 118 (2018).

<sup>136</sup> Whyte, Indigenous climate change studies: Indigenizing futures, decolonizing the Anthropocene.

<sup>137</sup> Neimanis and Walker, *Weathering*, 567.