

**From the  
Turn-Turn  
to the  
Ceno-Cene:  
Orienting  
Oneself  
Under  
Paradigmatic  
Conditions**

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**Any reader of academic literature, exhibition texts or even just the title of a conference panel, has waded through the muddy waters of buzzwords surrounding the humanities of recent decades. With academia as well as the art world being competitive fields with ever-changing currents, there is pressure to distinguish oneself – and what better way to do so than to coin an original concept? And while one might think that a useful concept is one that ages better than its contemporaries and passes the test of time, one is confronted with plenty of evidence that points to certain trends within the naming of these concepts.**

**The first term to set such a trend likely has to be the linguistic turn, which describes an analytical interest in language occurring in the humanities around the beginning of the 20th century, centered around the idea of language constituting the fundamental structure of human understanding.<sup>1</sup> The wording of the ‘turn’ is appealing, no doubt. It harkens back to the influential, paradigm-shifting moment of the Copernican turn, which did nothing short of reconfiguring prevailing imaginaries of the universe as a whole, revoking humanity’s central position within the cosmos.**

**affective turn, archival turn, aretaic turn, affective turn, cognitive turn, computational turn, Copernican turn, cultural turn, curatorial turn, datafication turn, emotional turn, empirical turn, ethical turn, epistemic turn, historiographic turn, iconic turn, interpretive turn, linguistic turn, machine turn, mediatic turn, metaphysical turn, nonhuman turn, performative turn, phenomenological turn, political turn, postcolonial turn, postcultural turn, practice turn, pragmatic turn, reflective turn, speculative turn, talmudic turn, televisual turn,**

**Funnily enough, however, Copernicus never referred to his own discoveries as a ‘turn’, and neither did Immanuel Kant, who is credited as the first person to liken his work to this paradigm shift. Where**

Copernicus takes earth, and, by extension, humans out of the center of the universe, Kant reverses this move by affording the subject the central position within his philosophy.<sup>2</sup> The description of Kant's thinking as a 'turn' by others, however, prompted the term to be ascribed to a number of other ramification-rich shifts in thinking, such as Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, and, finally, the linguistic turn.

As the linguistic turn was quickly followed by a number of other turns, such as the interpretive turn, the performative turn, the reflexive turn, the postcolonial turn, as well as the iconic/pictorial turn – all of which have been subsumed under the idea of a larger 'cultural turn'<sup>3</sup> – it could be viewed as a sort of turn of the second order, a “‘mega’-turn”,<sup>4</sup> a turn that started all other turns, a paradigm shift in the way in which paradigm shifts are named – the turn-turn, if you will.

And – as is to be expected after turning too many times, academia seems to have gotten somewhat dizzy after all of these capricious maneuvers of thought, finally falling ill and appearing to suffer from some kind of 'condition'. Such as the digital condition. Or the platform condition. Or the participatory condition.

biological turn, body turn, circulatory turn, cinematic turn, creative industries turn, critical logical turn, digital turn, ecological turn, forensic turn, hermeneutic turn, historical turn, informational turn, infrastructural turn, linguistic turn, material turn, mechanistic turn, man turn, ontophobic turn, participatory cultural turn, philosophical turn, pictorial turn, racial turn, post-subcultural turn, practical turn, second digital turn, spatial turn, technological turn, terrestrial turn, theological turn, ...

Looking back into the history of philosophy, it is difficult to find a definitive trend-setter here. While the term certainly recalls the human condition as suggested by Hannah Arendt in 1958,

**all-out internet condition, contemporar  
condition, human condition, participato  
human condition, post-digital conditio  
mental condition, postmodern conditi  
condition, .txtual condition, virtual cor**

another possible patient zero for this terminological endemic might be Jean-François Lyotard with the postmodern condition.

It is tempting to read this shift in the naming of paradigm shifts as a response to the inflation of the turn, stepping up an order of magnitude. Just like the human condition, any other academic condition claims to be inadvertent, ubiquitous, not to be dispensed with. There is no escaping the condition. One might even call the prevalence of the 'condition' terminology itself a condition, turning back to Arendt, perhaps the 'humanities condition' would be an appropriate name.

But sometimes, there is the need to express a shift that is even more meaningful. A shift that not only influences the lives of humans, but the totality of the planet. A shift that is so groundbreaking that not even the fish at the bottom of the ocean can escape it, which is where the '-cene' comes in. After the turn-turn and the condition-condition we have now entered the ceno-cene. Here, the Anthropocene clearly was the trendsetter, positing a geological epoch nominally defined by the influence of human civilization on the planet and the environment.

**Anthrobscene, Anthropocene, Astycene, |  
Capitalocene, Congocene, Cthulucene, |  
Eremocene, Growthocene, Homogenoce  
cene, Neganthropocene, Plantationocen  
Thermocene, Trumpocene, Urbanocene**

The Anthropocene was quickly countered by concepts like the Capitalocene and Donna Haraway's Chthulucene,<sup>5</sup> a trend which quickly spiraled out of control, leaving us with such timeless gems as the Trumpocene or the Enshittocene.<sup>6</sup> The -cene-fad recently acquired an additional level of absurdity when the proposal of the Anthropocene as an epoch was rejected by an official commission of geologists,<sup>7</sup> arguably collapsing the terminological house of cards built on this initial -cene.

**y condition, curatorial condition, digital  
ory condition, platform condition, post-  
n, post-fordist condition, post-govern-  
ion, postprocessual condition, textual  
dition,...**

**Next to the inflationary undercurrent associated with the plethora of proposed geological epochs, one cannot help but wonder whether this is not some academic arms race: It is not enough to develop a limited, but compelling concept applicable to a specific problem in a specific context. Instead, every pop-philosopher and would-be-theorist has to discover something as grandiose as to constitute a new era in the age of our planet.**

**Amidst all of this paradigmging and all of this shifting, it is insightful to recall that the paradigm itself is a term with a long and debated history, as Lorraine Daston discusses in her recent book. With reference to Thomas Kuhn, who popularized the concept of the paradigm in the 1960s,<sup>8</sup> she writes: “a science becomes worthy of the name when it acquires its first paradigm”.<sup>9</sup> With this in mind, it seems as though the humanities are on their way to becoming the best scientific discipline yet.**

**Betacene, A Billion Black Anthropocenes,  
Econocene, Enshittocene, Entropocene,  
ne, Metropocene, Molysmocene, Necro-  
e, Pyrocene, Technocene, Thanatocene,  
, Urbicene,...**

Academic Paradigm Generator

- Month of Birth
- + Day of Birth
- + First letter of your name

Month of Birth

- |           |         |
|-----------|---------|
| January   | Xeno-   |
| February  | Post-   |
| March     | Meta-   |
| April     | Queer   |
| May       | Anti-   |
| June      | Pre-    |
| July      | Cyber-  |
| August    | Trans-  |
| September | Hydro-  |
| October   | Techno- |
| November  | Proto-  |
| December  | Hyper-  |

## Day of Birth

## First letter of your name

1	Performative	A-D	Condition
2	Platform	E-H	Turn
3	Internet	I-L	-ocene
4	Ontology	M-P	Gaze
5	Spiritual	Q-T	Media
6	Network	U-Z	Art
7	Symbolic		
8	Phenomenology		
9	Imperative		
10	Delusional		
11	Patriarchal		
12	Media		
13	Cultural		
14	Critical		
15	Futures		
16	Epistemology		
17	Participatory		
18	Terrestrial		
19	Genealogy		
20	Relational		
21	Capitalism		
22	Infrastructural		
23	Informational		
24	Feminist		
25	Rhizomatic		
26	Migrational		
27	Urban		
28	Digital		
29	Ecology		
30	Conceptual		
31	Curatorial		