

The intellectual and political legacies of the Enlightenment endure in our times, whether we aspire to orient ourselves by them or contest their claims. In the face of feudality and subservience to authority, the Enlightenment intellectuals enunciate ideals of equality and rights as a way out of domination towards freedom. However, as has been pointed out by scholars of Postcolonial and Holocaust Studies, Enlightenment's promise of attaining freedom through the exercise of reason has ironically resulted in domination by reason itself. Instead of progress and emancipation, it has brought colonialism, slavery, genocide and crimes against humanity. Against this background, Dhawan's talk engages with the challenging question "What went wrong with the Enlightenment?" and traces the ambivalent consequences of the European Enlightenment for the postcolonial world. The postcolonial critique of the Enlightenment is caught in a performative contradiction in that the vocabulary of critique is inherited from the target of its critique. Her talk addresses this double bind and the challenge this sets up for politics in the postcolonial world.

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The English verb 'to err' has largely lost its positive connotations. It no longer invokes wandering, rambling, or roaming, and is now understood negatively in relation to a prescribed path or goal. To be sure, errors are acknowledged to play an important role in the pursuit of knowledge and happiness, but usually only to the extent that their recognition allows for their elimination, correction, and avoidance. Recognizing that a critique of ideals of productivity, success, goal-orientation, and determination is necessarily paradoxical, the **ICI Lecture Series ERRANS** will take the shifting meanings of 'erring' – connoting the violation of norms as well as the activity of wandering – as a prompt to explore the critical potentials and risks of embracing error, randomness, failure, and non-teleological temporalities, and to do so across different disciplines and discourses.

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Errant Enlightenment: The Dilemma of Postcolonial Critique

