

In most histories of Western science, the period 1500-1700 is depicted as the crucible in which modern science was forged: a triumphal parade of great minds – Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, Leibniz, Huygens, Newton – transformed our understanding of the earth and heavens and set the pattern for modern science ever since. It was the first of many progressive revolutions in science. For many historians, this Scientific Revolution of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe was the Big Bang event that ignited modernity. Yet from the standpoint of contemporaries, the events retrospectively celebrated as the Scientific Revolution were perceived as a horrific realization that for almost two millennia, the finest minds had been thoroughly mistaken about the geography of the earth, the nature of comets, the anatomy and physiology of the human body, the system of the heavens, and much, much else. For them, their epoch was one of grievous errors revealed as much as one of new knowledge discovered. This acute consciousness of error and fallibility stamped modern epistemology ever since – and triggered an acute fear of being taken in by beguiling counterfeit realities, from Don Quixote's romantic fantasies to Descartes' vortices and other "palaces of the imagination."

Lorraine Daston is Director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin, and Visiting Professor in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. She is the author of numerous books and articles on the history of probability and statistics, wonders in early modern science, visualization in science, objectivity, and scientific observation. Her most recent book (with Paul Erikson et al.) is *How Reason Almost Lost Its Mind: The Strange Career of Cold War Rationality* (2014).

ICI Lecture Series **ERRANS**

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** takes 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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**Before Scientific Revolutions:
Error and the Fear of Error**