Call For Papers: ‘Error in the Age of Thomas Browne’

In 1646, the polymath and physician Thomas Browne published his great work on error: *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. He sought to correct popular misconceptions, such as that beavers bite off their own testicles when fleeing attack (III.IV). Browne was following a new European movement of error correction, including Laurent Joubert’s *Erreurs populaires* (1578); Girolamo Mercurii’s *De gli errori popolari d’Italia* (1603, 1645, 1658); and James Primrose’s *De Vulgi in Medicina Erroribus* (1639, 1651). Writers gave unprecedented attention to ‘error’ in all categories of thought, from medicine and superstition, to the natural world and astronomy.

At the same time, new technology provided unimagined opportunity for the correction of faulty belief. Natural philosophers peered through the microscope discovering the intricate details of a flea, and through telescopes they saw the moons of Jupiter and Saturn’s rings. What happened to error in the age of science, where accuracy, standardisation and rectitude became increasingly prized? Was there a relation between the growing demand for accurate information and the creeping standardisation of printed texts? How did the status of error differ across intellectual contexts?

Proposals for 20-minute papers are welcome on any aspect of error, in Anglophone or non-Anglophone cultures, from all disciplines. Topics may include but are not limited to:

- Miscalculations
- Faulty images
- Error defined by *error*, as wandering
- Correction and its failures
- Error and the material book
- Humanist and religious conceptions of error
- Technology and experimentation

Please email a 250-word abstract and short biography to Dr Alice Leonard at alice.leonard@ell.ox.ac.uk.

Deadline: 20th February 2019

PhD students and those from minority backgrounds are especially encouraged to apply. Small bursaries will be available to help with travel and caring costs; please request one when submitting your abstract.

The conference will be held at the Institute of Advanced Study, University of Warwick, on 7th June 2019. For more information, see here: [https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/ias/news/events/error_thomas_browne/]