**Collège de Sociologie**

A discussion group of French intellectuals established in Paris in March 1937, the Collège de Sociologie lasted until late 1939. Co-founded by Georges Bataille (1897-1962), Roger Caillois (1913-1978) and Michel Leiris (1901-1990) – a fourth initiator, Jules Monnerot (1908-1995), was swiftly dismissed – the group’s name was a deliberate provocation. Didacticism was not its goal, and it abjured the sociological tradition, with its roots in scientific method. Instead, the Collège focused on the modern relevance of myth, power and the sacred to combat the fascist menace on the rise in the 1930s. Building on Émile Durkheim’s ethnological research into primitive societies, the lectures, which were often improvised, covered such topics as carnival, shamanism, Sade, power and the army. The heterogeneous gathering of ethnologists, philosophers, writers and artists met twice a month in a bookshop in Paris’s Latin Quarter. Audience members included Julien Benda (1867-1956), Drieu La Rochelle (1893-1945) and the émigré German theoreticians Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno. By the early months of 1939 internal rifts were developing, as Bataille became increasingly isolated – Caillois was often absent and Leiris had serious reservations about the concept of the sacred and the group’s lack of rigour. The onset of war in September 1939 brought a swift halt to the Collège’s activities and its plans for combatting fascism.

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**References and further reading**

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