**Huizinga, Johan (1872-1945)**

Born in Groningen, the Netherlands, Johan Huizinga was a Dutch cultural historian widely considered as one of the pioneering analysts of cultural life, whose major works – *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919; *The Waning of the Middle Ages*), *Erasmus* (1924) and *Homo Ludens* (1938; translated 1955) – are regarded as early models for modern cultural history. With a doctoral degree in linguistics in 1897, and proficient in Sanskrit and Indic history and literature, Huizinga taught Oriental History in Haarlem from 1897 to 1903, before taking up the chair of General and Dutch History in Groningen from 1905 to 1915 and teaching General History in Leiden until his detention by the Nazis in 1942. Huizinga’s unique brand of cultural criticism set forth a new conception of history, combining a strong interest in aesthetics and forms of imagination with a historical investigation of mentalities across various strata of the medieval society. Such an anthropological conception of history, seeking to integrate all aspects of human life, anticipated the Annales School. Led by French historians Lucien Febvre (1878-1956) and Marc Bloch (1886-1944), and inspired by Huizinga’s work, this trend took up the challenge of going beyond traditional approaches to historical facts permeated with positivism. Huizinga’s now classic study *Homo Ludens* rehabilitated the practice of play in human culture, suggesting that play should be understood as a distinctive category of no lesser importance for civilisation than its scientific or technological achievements.

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