Vitorino Magalhães Godinho was born in Lisbon, in June 1918, into a family with republican traditions, and he died in April 2011. Early in his life, he made frequent contact in Lisbon with leading figures from the Portuguese culture of that time, such as Newton de Macedo, Delfim Santos, António Sêrgio and the staff of the journal Seara Nova (Magalhães, 1988: 2).

As a student, he attended the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon, although he did not really fit in there, such that, intellectually speaking, he can be considered to have been largely self-taught, as has already been noted (Magalhães, 1988: 2). This author considered this circumstance to be the starting point for Godinho’s own self-education, which (and I quote) obliged him to read the “great masters - Henri Pirenne, Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, Vidal de la Blanche, Gordon Childe, Léon Brunschvicg, Edmond Goblot, Pierre Janet, Jean Piaget, Paul Guillaume, [and the Portuguese] Jaime Cortesão, António Sêrgio, Duarte Leite and Veiga Simões” (Magalhães, 1988: 2).

Having graduated in Philosophy and History, his first work of major importance was entitled Reason and History [Razão e história (introdução a um problema) (1940)]. Years later, shortly before he died, he spoke about this first book in an interview, saying, “I still think that history is a science, or a scientifically conducted activity, but it is important that it should be further complemented by philosophical reflection, and indeed by the study of all the humanities. Philosophical reflection enlightens us and guides us; it shows us the deeper meaning of things” (GODINHO, 2011).

Vitorino Magalhães Godinho then became a teacher at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon, where he lectured from 1942 to 1944. Although he was required to teach a wide variety of different subjects (as was the common practice at that time) (Magalhães, 1988: 3; Sousa, 2012: 155), in 1943, he published the first volume of Documents on the Portuguese Expansion (Documentos sobre a expansão portuguesa), which was followed by two further volumes in 1945 and 1956. This work is remarkable for its selection of sources and the critical comments which accompany these, and it is still considered today to be an

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