When during my tenure as visiting professor of humanistic studies at The Johns Hopkins University I was invited to give some public lectures, I accepted the undeserved honor and privilege with alacrity. This gave me an excellent opportunity to put before a larger—and, as it turned out, a most appreciative—audience the results of some of my research. In several respects the invitation was also a challenge, especially insofar as I was forced to clarify my own thoughts upon a topic which has engaged my attention for a number of years and on which I could do no more than touch in some of my recent publications.

Looking as a medievalist at the modern and contemporary period and its rather bulky output on the topic of the individual and society, I have long been struck by the total absence of any historical treatment of this topic. This lacuna seems to me all the more noteworthy since there is virtually no other subject or topic or problem in the Middle Ages about which historical research has not been conducted. The most minute and, as often as not, quite insignificant questions in medieval history have been subjected to rigorous and repeated examinations, but a theme as central as that of the individual and his standing in medieval society has
not, to all seeming, attracted much attention either among professional medievalists or among numerous research students. There is, of course, an abundance of historical literature on such politological questions as the rights and functions of kings, popes, and emperors; on the origin, scope, and contents of these rights; on medieval representative bodies; on the legislative process; and the like, but the individual as such—who after all was at all times the center of things—is only mentioned in passing. Part of the explanation for this lack of \textit{ex professo} treatment may well lie in the very character of the medieval writings themselves, which explicitly devoted remarkably little, if any, space to the standing of the individual, his functions, his rights, his duties, and so on. Medieval writings dealt, on the other hand, rather fully with the former topics which are presented to the modern reader by way of classification, systematization, division and subdivision, but of the individual himself one reads extraordinarily little.

There is nowadays considerable attention paid to the nature of political obligation and related questions—political scientists no less than sociologists, social psychologists, demographers, and others busy themselves to find the substance and kernel of this obligation. It is indeed a legitimate source of inquiry which should have provoked the historians of medieval political ideas to similar investigations, such as why medieval man obeyed a king or a pope, why obedience could be exacted from medieval man, why the latter's right to advocate heterodox opinions was severely restricted, why, above all, the individual was, for the greater part of the Middle Ages, merely a subject and not a citizen, why there was to be in the course of time a replacement of the subject by the citizen, with consequences and repercussions still only dimly grasped. These and similar questions should long have been the proper métier of historical jurisprudence or of the historian of political ideas.
At least one potent reason for the neglect of this topic appears to be inattention to linguistic usage. Although medieval writings do not delve explicitly into the standing of the individual, they nevertheless have a great deal to say implicitly on his rights and functions, and so on. Modern research into medieval politology apparently has not yet recognized that a sharp, basic, and conceptual distinction has to be drawn between the individual as a subject and the individual as a citizen. However vital and fundamental it is to discern clearly between these two notions, the distinction has not yet, to my knowledge, excited the interest of modern writers on medieval politological questions. What strikes the attentive reader is that in modern works which should have examined the topic, there is lack of discrimination where subtle discrimination is called for. As soon as the distinction between the notions of the subject and the citizen is realized, however, one is able to test medieval writings and medieval sources adequately, and one soon comes to realize that in medieval doctrine the subject—or for that matter, later, the citizen—occupied a considerable space. To be sure, there was rarely a chapter heading professedly dealing with the topic, and the inquiring historian has, so to speak, to construct, if not to reconstruct the theme, but the thing itself, the subject matter, was there. Moreover, since there was no political science before the thirteenth century, a number of sources must be subjected to close scrutiny, sources which range from the Bible to chancery practices, from law to theology, from liturgy to coronation symbolism, from a theological Summa to a publicistic tract, and so on: they all in one way or another have something to say on the individual either as a subject or as a citizen.

What I intended to do in these three lectures was no more than to direct attention to this vital problem of the subject and of the citizen, and to delineate the process by which the
latter supplanted the former. In trying to indicate the main phases by which this process of replacement took place, I had to give appropriate space to medieval feudalism which, despite its variegated character in different regions and countries, had nevertheless a number of features which could well be classed as invariable, of whatever kind particular feudal arrangements might have been. It has seemed to me for some time that medieval feudalism contributed at least as much to the growth of specific political ideas as did the learned disquisitions of medieval schoolmen and jurists. This realization of mine owes a great deal to the works of the late Sidney Painter. I considered it, therefore, a very special distinction to be able to give these lectures in Painter’s own university, for in this most suitable place I was privileged to propound, with however many shortcomings, the crucial role which feudalism played in the transition from the individual as a subject to a full-fledged citizen, that is, in the transition from medieval to modern times. To dedicate the printed lectures to the memory of Sidney Painter seems to me a self-evident and pleasant duty—it was he who had seen in medieval feudalism one of the great creative forces of the civilization which we like to call modern.

Although historical in content and scope, the problems treated in these lectures also have a certain topical and contemporary-modern interest, for it would be too facile to assume that the properly medieval viewpoint of the individual as a mere subject is of concern only to the professional historian of the Middle Ages. There are still a number of societies and governments today or in the recent past which extol the duty of obedience as the foremost civic virtue, although the citizen has little opportunity of creating and shaping the law which he is to obey. This kind of existence is, from the individual’s standpoint, admittedly a comfortable one because it relieves him of making any critical assessments and of forming his own judgment, moving from rationaliza-
tion to conformity and producing, eventually, uniformity. This obediential standpoint provides a protective shelter for the individual, though he thereby is exposed to the danger of losing what Dante called the most precious gift which God had conferred on man—his freedom. Names and nomenclatures may have changed, but in some structures of modern society one finds, when one approaches it with a critical-historical eye, considerable remnants of the medieval structure of society and of the standing of the individual within it. The emancipation from medieval ways of reasoning and thinking—though they are no longer called by their proper names—has certainly not gone so far as one might be inclined, perhaps unreflectingly, to think. If these lectures were to contribute to a better understanding of the genesis of modern society and the individual within it or at least to open the one or the other vista not hitherto perceived, they might contribute to the realization of the age-old demand γνῶθι σεαυτόν.

The three lectures, delivered at The Johns Hopkins University in March, 1965, are here published in somewhat expanded form. Some of the main conclusions reached formed also the subject of my Frederick Whiton Lecture in the Humanities at Cornell University in May, 1965. In view of the magnitude of the problem, I am fully aware of the work which still needs to be done, but I believe a beginning ought to be made. I have tried, therefore, to fix attention upon some of the salient features, knowing well that even they are in need of supplementation, quite apart from the numerous subordinate and side issues. I have also tried to keep the footnote apparatus to tolerable dimensions and have quoted in extenso only where the point required full citation. I thought it right to preserve the structure of the lectures as originally given.

There remains for me only the agreeable duty of thanking the many faculty members of The Johns Hopkins Uni-
versity, especially of the departments of history and of political science, for the stimulating suggestions they made to me and the encouragement I received from them. I would also like to take the opportunity of thanking the alert members of the Humanities Seminar of The Johns Hopkins University for their sometimes searching, sometimes constructive, but always well-informed criticisms which in true scholarly fashion they offered me and which made me realize a number of points to which I might otherwise have paid less attention.

Cambridge
November 29, 1965