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Real Men Prove Darwin Wrong (Again)

TOM WOLFE, "The Human Beast," 2006 NEH Jefferson Lecture.

TOM WOLFE, *A Man In Full* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998).

TOM WOLFE, *I Am Charlotte Simmons* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004).

HARVEY C. MANSFIELD, *Manliness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

CARSON HOLLOWAY, *The Right Darwin: Evolution, Religion, and the Future of Democracy* (Dallas: Spence, 2006).

America's two most astute social commentators, the political philosopher Harvey Mansfield and the novelist Tom Wolfe, have weighed in on the debate over the neo-Darwinian view of evolution. They agree that the real controversy in our country is not between rationalists who preach evolutionism and fundamentalists who live in Darwin-denial, but between those who still believe that evolution can account for the whole of human behavior and those who see with their own eyes that it does not. The Darwinians, they observe, cannot properly account for the natural human quality that Mansfield calls "manliness" and that Wolfe, following the sociologists, describes as each individual's concern for his own status or ranking. The Darwinians do not recognize what genuinely distinguishes the human individual from everything else in nature, so they cannot account for such admirable phenomena as Carson Holloway's defense of transcendent human nobility against Darwinian reductionism.

Mansfield's *Manliness* is an ambitious and profound attempt to account for the human individual in terms of his need for—and his dramatic assertion of—singular, indispensable importance. The individual he describes is not the sovereign or utterly free (but also fearfully miserable) modern individual invented by Hobbes. Nor is he the Christian person whose dignity is graciously guaranteed by the Creator who made and loves him. The manly individual is not the contemporary individual who understands his freedom as the replacement of social virtue by selfish calculation whom I criticize in *Stuck with Virtue*. Nor, finally, is he the Freudian individual who distinguishes himself by the uniqueness of his unconscious desires.

The manly individual, the real human being, asserts that he is more than—essentially or qualitatively different from—his slavish fears, obsessions, and bodily desires. Wolfe shows in all

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his essays and novels that the truth of this assertion is still evident everywhere in our country today. In his most recent novel, *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, he describes life at an elite contemporary university in terms of manly struggles for status. He focuses on a brilliant young woman (Charlotte Simmons) who enters the university convinced that she will distinguish herself through the life of the mind, and a young man (Jojo Johanssen) proud of his physical prowess as one of the country's most talented basketball players. Both Charlotte and Jojo think of themselves, not without reason, as natural aristocrats, distinguished from almost all of humanity by their mental or physical excellence.

Charlotte and Jojo certainly do *not* think of themselves—as the evolutionists do—merely as members of their species, or of a kin group. And they are right not to do so. Wolfe's and Mansfield's observations on the singular importance of the human individual are nobly supplemented by Carson Holloway's excellent *The Right Darwin*. Holloway (who writes as a real man, contemptuous of anyone who cannot see how important human beings can be) develops an Aristotelian-Tocquevillian critique of the view that Darwinian materialism could ever provide an adequate account of the goodness or greatness of the virtue alone practiced by human individuals. More insistently than Wolfe or Mansfield, Holloway defends the transcendent heights in which manliness surpasses itself in the direction of genuine human perfection.

Reflecting seriously on the individual defined by manliness can transform our understanding of who we are. And there is a great deal of empirical evidence for the truth of this view: making the case against Darwin and on behalf of human dignity need not depend on revelation or the distinctive insights of Christian psychology. This is made plain in the fine anti-Darwinian scientific observations found in Tom Wolfe's 2006 Jefferson Lecture on "The Human Beast."

There, Wolfe claims to cover "everything you will need to know about the human beast." The phrase "human beast" he borrows from the title of Emile Zola's famous novel, the first literary presentation of Darwin's alleged discovery that human beasts are not really different from all the others. The sudden and sensational popularization of that "breakthrough" in the nineteenth century divided the intellectual world into two classes. The "God-fearing bourgeoisie" were "appalled by the suggestion that they were not created in the Creator's image." So they have raged against the scientific denial of individual human dignity or importance. The intellectuals—"whose business it was to look down on the bourgeois from a great height"—embraced the new enlightenment that elevated each of them by reducing everyone else to beasts. In effect, they took pride in knowing that pride had no natural foundation. They incoherently believed that by seeing themselves and everyone else as beasts they had achieved a sort of divine wisdom about all things. Now the persistence of this class struggle over dignity or status—for five generations—is undeniable evidence of the distinctiveness of the human beast.

All the genuinely scientific evidence, Wolfe observes, shows that the beast with speech is a beast like no other. No sociobiologist has effectively taken on Noam Chomsky's observation that there is no sign that human speech evolved from any animal lower than man. It also should be obvious that this singular natural acquisition cannot be understood merely as an "ingenious tool" to help the human beast flourish in his environment. It is, rather, Wolfe says, a "nuclear weapon" that brought "natural" evolution to an end.

Not only is there no sign of the evolution

of human beings after that mysterious acquisition, something like 11,000 years ago, but the fate of all the species ever since has become much more a matter of human choice than the result of any impersonal or accidental natural process. "Today the so-called animal kingdom," Wolfe notices, "exists only at the human beast's sufferance." Even "the unseen empire of the microbes" has suffered crippling blows from our hands. We are free to be sentimental about the brainy dolphins and grant them a future, just as we are free to think of tuna as dimwits who deserve to die. But the dolphins, of course, cannot talk about or have any say over what happens to *us*. The truth is that the human capacity for speech makes the difference between us and the dolphins infinitely greater than that which separates the dolphins and the tuna.

Tom Wolfe

The beast with speech can neither be accounted for by evolutionary theory nor be confined by the evolutionary process. The founder of sociobiology, E.O. Wilson, has written that the promise and danger of biotechnology is that human beings will replace impersonal natural evolution with conscious and volitional evolution. Wolfe reasons that biotechnology is just the latest extension of the *freedom* given to the beast with speech. Evolution was destined from our beginning to become progressively less impersonal and more conscious and personal.

That is not to say, however, that evolution was destined to become more *rational.* Wolfe talks about *homo loquax* and not the unrealistic abstraction *homo sapiens.* We certainly do not use our reason to view ourselves with dispassionate objectivity, which is to say, selflessly. The manly human beast employs language and the capacities it gives him to assert indispensable *individual* importance. As Wolfe explains, human beasts are inevitably guilty of "championism," of aggressively promoting their particular way of life as the most excellent and dignified one imaginable. Human life always tends to be grounded in a "fiction absolute" that identifies *my* group—which is an extension of *my* identity—as the best possible group. Even Socrates, after all, was pretty certain that philosophy—the only thing at which he was really, really good—was not only the core of his identity but the one best way of life, indeed, that for which all things exist.

Darwinians criticize the human tendency toward championism, and they fight against both our individualism and our speciesism. Science, they think, promises to free us from the illusion that there is anything special about *me* or *mine.* It frees us from our religious tendency to think God gave us a privileged place in the nature which, in truth, treats all life forms with equal indifference. The theory of evolution, according to Wolfe, is both a denial of, and a replacement for, religion. It replaces the older "championism" with the proudly dogmatic atheism of those who style themselves special enough to know that there is nothing at all special about us.

Almost the first creation of the beast with speech was religion, Wolfe observes. Speech gave the human beast the ability to raise questions about his origin and destiny, creating a "sudden but insatiable anxiety" in the absence of answers about his individual importance and purpose. As Mansfield explains, it was natural for the human beast to devote more attention and resources to pursue religious answers to those questions than to his mere physical self-preservation. The deepest human anxi-

ety, the most "primal" form of human "anguish," Wolfe asserts, does not concern our mere lives but rather their significance—in our own eyes and in the eyes of others. Most of all, we fear not death but humiliation.

Since it is impossible for us to secure our individual existences—to free ourselves from our contingency, vulnerability, and mortality—through our material pursuits, we turn our attention to our "manly" ability to transcend our biological limitations through the admirable risk of life. The individual, Mansfield writes, has the "abstract" and "idealistic" ability to identify that "transcendent" being with his real being. And that is why, for the human beast, courage is just as fundamental as fear. Manliness allows the individual to free himself from the domination of the instinct for self-preservation, or at least to transform and ennoble the self he wants preserved. Religion, most fundamentally, does not alleviate our fear but provides the support of God or the gods for our assertion of the indispensable importance of our particular lives. Religion counters what we can see with our own eyes about nature's indifference to the "drama," the greatness and misery, of each of our particular existences.

Religion also secures the standard of perfection by which we can orient our individual lives, making our assertions more than mere assertions. This is why Mansfield can say that religion addresses the fundamental need of the being with speech even better than does philosophy. The philosopher searches incessantly for answers to the questions concerning how human beings should live, including the question, "What is God?" Religion answers those questions because it provides knowledge of "Who God is"—of a God personal enough to see and support us as individuals.

From the perspective of manliness, religion is more fundamental than philosophy because the "Who" issue—the question of personal identity—is more important for the being with speech than the "What" issue—the truth about all things from an impersonal perspective. The manly man (or woman), Mansfield explains, knows *what* to do because he knows *who* he is, and that what he contributes to the world is admirable and indispensable. His manliness is what gives him the confidence and certainty to act in the face of risk, and this assertiveness depends upon his *not* having what a philosopher would regard as a completely realistic view of his situation.

That does not mean that the manly man is necessarily religious. But he has no use for and can be undermined by a doctrine that denies his importance or fills him with doubt. He has no use, Wolfe explains, for evolutionism or neo-Darwinian neuroscience. But Stoicism—understood as a dogma about the human being's rational freedom from chance and necessity under a rather providential and judgmental Zeus—might provide him what he really needs to be a "man in full," even when left alone and helpless in the state-of-nature environment of a maximum security prison. One of Wolfe's characters speaks of going to "the Church of Zeus" and being a "Zeussian," and another becomes a very successful Zeussian evangelist. As it happens, in order to be effective, Zeussianism has to incorporate many Christian elements.

Commenting on Wolfe's *A Man in Full*, Mansfield says that Stoicism is "the philosophy of manliness," of "inner freedom, of manly confidence learned by living as if you were a prisoner and had to depend for your happiness on nothing external to yourself." But Stoicism so understood, Mansfield suggests, is not really philosophy. It unrealistically exaggerates individual self-sufficiency. But Wolfe also allows for that criticism of the extremism of the philosopher-slave Epictetus. His new Zeussian disciple's first Stoic act is a rejection of the philo-

sophic advice about happiness depending on indifference to the misery of others: he courageously saves the life of a stranger who is suffering physically and mentally from the most miserable form of social ostracism in prison. In other words, the first act of the born-again Zeussian is an awfully Christian one.

Mansfield shows that, certain Stoics aside, the characteristic tendency of the philosophers has been too hard on manly exaggeration; the philosophers instead have themselves exaggerated in an anti-manly direction. The modern or Machiavellian philosophers attempted to deploy manliness to assert "rational control" over nature and human nature. But it is manliness, above all, that needs to be controlled if nature is to be conquered. Human beings need to become more rational and predictable. Human beings must stop loving war and conflict as opportunities to display individual excellence. The real way to secure individual importance is to make individual lives more secure: dead individuals aren't important at all. The modern paradox is that the individual must be vanquished for the individual *really* to prevail. The manly or honorable way of defying death is for losers; the more effective way is technological—which makes warfare less dramatic or personal, but mightily increases the odds of victory.

Plato and Aristotle, Mansfield continues, did not aim to produce a world without manliness because they did not identify wisdom with power. They attempted to curb without utterly discouraging manly excesses. But even they may have overdone their assertiveness on behalf of reason. The Socratic philosophers criticize the manly man for not being manly enough, for not taking his ability to think abstractly to its rational conclusion, for not abstracting from the "Who" to ask about the "What." Philosophy means being courageous enough to stop thinking personally about the way things are; philosophy is the courage to learn how to die. That courage is displayed in the life of Socrates, the drama of the particular individual knowing the anonymous truth. But both the manly man and the empirically minded woman can respond to the philosopher by saying that thinking in terms of "What" unrealistically abstracts from "Who," from the real existence of particular beasts with speech, whose behavior cannot be captured by any understanding of impersonal natural necessity. And the "Who," Wolfe contends, has the "nuclear" capability to transform the "What" in light of his own individual importance.

In *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, Wolfe explains how Plato's presentation of the principled and courageous Socrates changed the world through and on behalf of thought. The Socratics (or Platonists) assert the doctrine that true manliness—what Mansfield calls "true, chosen virtue"—is the use of reason to control bodily desire on behalf of the rational soul. Living according to reason is the best way to transcend the body and its limitations. Wolfe presents that simple, ennobling doctrine's effect on an otherwise spiritually directionless young athlete by awakening his manly longing to *know* that he is, and to *act* as if he were, more than a body.

Wolfe's Socratism, like his Stoicism, does not dispense with the watchful Zeus and is concerned primarily with individual perfection, not the impersonal truth about all things. Through his Socratic inspiration, what Jojo recovers, against the grain of his social environment and most of his education, is what Wolfe describes in his legendary essay, "Sorry, but Your Soul Just Died" (found in his *Hooking Up*), as the very "notion of the self—a self who exercises self-discipline, postpones gratification, curbs

the sexual appetite, stops short of aggression and criminal behavior—a self who can become more intelligent and lift itself to the very peaks of life by its own bootstraps through study, practice, perseverance, and refusal to give up in the face of great odds." He discovers an idea of *virtue* worthy of a rational *man*, and that discovery transforms all of his life, even or especially his athletic performance. He benefits from, as Charlotte explains, "the 'liberal' arts," the arts of persuasion appropriate for free men and citizens.

Such a religion of rationalism is criticized for being unrealistic by the Aristotle Jojo is reading. The true "Who" or soul is both rational and irrational, and it is unreasonable to expect that reading about Socrates could really save the famous athlete from a beautiful groupie's seduction. Yet it could give him a sense of his own dignity or importance, enough to protect him from much of the fearful and degrading social conformity—"playing the fool"—that has enslaved his fellow athletes. It even allows him to loathe himself when he exploits or is exploited by groupies. His life, in the Socratic sense, is "turned around."

Jojo struggles with considerable success to free himself from identifying being a man with either the pseudo-adventurism of anonymous sexual promiscuity or the use of language like the F-word. The F-word, Wolfe shows us in both novels, is employed indiscriminately by those who can't control their own chaotic desires and are easily controlled by others. It is the language of slaves. Wolfe criticizes big-time college sports, most of all, for being a form of slavery that systematically denies the athletes the possibility of a genuinely liberal or liberating education—an education that identifies a real man with being a gentleman who looks up to those who tell the truth, knows how to treat women, and, more generally, has the courage and class to know what to do. He shows us that the Stoic slave works better to liberate men in the desperate circumstances of prison, while the democratic citizen Socrates is better for pseudo-warriors held emotionally captive by clever handlers like coaches and administrators in what should be the "Athenian" environment of the elite university.

The goal of liberal education, Mansfield and Wolfe agree, is the refining—both enlarging and moderating—of manliness, and so its goal is *not* questioning the very existence of the soul, of God, and of human excellence. Manliness, Mansfield asserts, has to be taken for granted—as Wolfe's Platonists and Stoics both did—if it is to be educated. That is why liberal education requires some kind of classical revival. Aristotle's *Ethics*, from this view, presents everything the individual *needs* to know about the human beast, but not everything there *is* to know. Aristotle's goal is to help men improve themselves with ennobling yet realistic images of human perfection. As Holloway says, "Aristotle's presentation of our natural directedness toward the noble can be viewed as a kind of longing for the transcendent." But that transcendence cannot be that of the Socrates who alone was courageous enough to know nothing. There is, after all, something Socratic in evolutionism's and neuroscience's denial of the pretensions of the individual about his soul and his identity, its denial of the very existence of "the self" that distinguishes you from me, and us from all the other animals.

Corrupted by modern science's hostility to and denial of the reality of manliness, our universities have abdicated the function of forming *men* (and, of course, manly women; all men and women are manly to some extent or other). Wolfe and Mansfield show us that Darwin's doctrine is one modern version among many of the attempt to understand all that exists through "general causes," or by abstracting from particular

individuals. Evolutionary progress, Mansfield explains, depends only "on average behavior from the mass of individuals without demanding moral perfection or heroism from any of them." There is no need for any particular individual to distinguish himself from the "mass," and all individual assertions of particular identities seem quite dispensable.

The gap is huge, as Mansfield notes, between the Darwinian account of nature and our manly longing for individual perfection. The evolutionary view is that there is nothing special about the human species or the human individual—or about anything at all. Particular lives only have meaning in terms of a species' survival and flourishing, and our species, like the others, is just one accidental emergence among many. But no individual has ever identified with or cared about his species; no member of any species has. The drama of the individual produced by manliness cannot become the drama of the species. Even when we are moved by movies about penguins, it is because we imagine that particular penguins have the characteristics of courageous and loving human individuals.

Harvey Mansfield

Darwinians often say that our true self-interest is the same as members of other species: it is not our physical survival that matters, but doing what we can to ensure our genetic survival. This self-interest "naturally" understood is at the foundation of such human values as kinship and reciprocity; the truth is that nature guides us to embrace as moral the behavior that best serves our genes. It is true enough that the particular human being lives on in one sense by passing his unique genetic code on to the next generation. But soon enough, Mansfield reminds us, nature disperses our genes into insignificance. And even if that were not true, no individual has ever identified his being with his genes, and so it is little to no solace to know that when I am dead, my genes are still alive. For the individual, Darwin gives no evidence at all that he transcends the obvious limits of his biological existence.

From the individual's point of view, as Mansfield observes, the teaching of Darwin really is that *I* am nothing. It is natural for the beast with speech to believe that he is nothing if not an individual with an important, indispensable identity. Because Darwin provides no support for the individual's "transcendent" sense of his own dignity, he is, whatever his intention, a *nihilist.* Wolfe complains that for the neo-Darwinians who dominate our university, the manly assertion *I Am Charlotte Simmons* means nothing, because the word "soul" cannot be employed without the quotation marks.

Charlotte Simmons, who went to the university with the manly confidence that she could distinguish herself through the virtuous pursuit of the life of the mind, ended up concluding—or half-believing, to protect herself from what she really knew—that true manliness means conforming yourself to the dominant status hierarchy. So she quite consciously secured her importance as the girlfriend of the best basketball player on the school's undefeated team, leading everyone to believe, quite falsely, that she (and not the Greek philosophers) was responsible for his new success. Studying neo-Darwinian neuroscience and her pathetic failure in the unregulated predatory struggle of student life combined to lead Charlotte to conclude that the individual is nothing but a projection for the eyes of others, and that in the struggle for status among beasts with speech, cleverness

(especially for women) is the key. She learned from her college experience—in and out of the classroom—that her own and all transcendent standards of human importance are vain illusions. Her new wisdom is that there is nothing higher than seeking social recognition for its own sake. So she quite consciously enslaves herself to the arbitrary opinions of others, opinions she cannot really respect (such as that basketball is interesting and important).

The dramatic movement of the novel, roughly speaking, is Charlotte's descent from freedom to slavery, and Jojo's ascent from slavery to freedom, through their experiences of higher education. Jojo, whom Charlotte only seems to rule, really does become a decent and very significant man, but she is stuck with struggling to maintain a decent and significant appearance. They both remain manly, but he has found a standard of perfection, and she is stuck with nihilism—as well as with a smart Christian momma from Sparta who reminds her she's a liar and loves her in a tough, utterly realistic way. (Charlotte's cowardly inability to let her momma hear her "completely true...hold-nothing-*nothing*-back" confession and experience the "blessed catharsis" that would follow is perhaps the novel's clearest Christian or Augustinian moment—in a novel that manages to mention "the City of God" repeatedly.)

Charlotte cannot really forget the distinction between her soul and her "soul," and that fact is the source of her ineradicable individual greatness and misery. She cannot forget that she is not living in light of the truth about herself as she genuinely experiences it. She cannot free herself from the soul that directs and stands in criticism of her "soul." She thinks she is both wiser and more contemptible than those, such as her boyfriend and her mother, for whom the distinction between soul and "soul" does not exist. Jojo, for example, lacks the irony or the depth to be capable of absorbing, in her view, the neuroscientific critique of Platonic pretensions; he really thinks, and is not wrong to think, that his new wisdom is the source of virtue. Wolfe in his legendary essay writes of the imminent coming of "some new Nietzsche" who will announce that the soul is dead, "because educated people no longer believe that it exists." But Wolfe is not that Nietzsche: Charlotte's soul, despite her newly sophisticated beliefs, remains alive. It is not true that the words *I Am Charlotte Simmons* mean nothing.

From the individual's perspective, evolutionism seems less like empirical science and more like part of the modern project to impose rational control on recalcitrant human nature. In a world guided by evolutionary wisdom, we would regard as superfluous, dangerous, and unnatural all human behavior incompatible with decent sociability. Holloway explains that the Darwinians do have a theory about such deviant behavior. A few people are natural psychopaths; their defective hardwiring causes them to lack normal social and moral feelings. The psychopath's selfish and exploitive behavior is both not typical and dangerous to us all; it must be forcibly controlled for everyone's good. The natural explanation of the psychopath does not suggest that we should regard him as natural in the sense either of normal or normative.

But from the indecent perspective of Machiavelli (who certainly had very unusual hardwiring), psychopaths might be understood simply to prefer consistently what's best for them as individuals to what's best for others or for the species. They refuse to be either social beings or species fodder. As really effective cheaters, astute psychopaths can readily exploit the relatively de-

cent and cooperative behavior of other members of our species to satisfy their own abnormal individual desires. From a Darwinian view, Holloway explains, no real moral appeal could be made to them. How can someone be blamed for acting according to his atypical natural inclinations? The discipline and punishment we must necessarily impose on psychopaths is, strictly speaking, unjust! But don't worry too much; justice as a true, chosen virtue has no evolutionary support.

A Darwinian, Holloway justly complains, can see no reason beyond natural inclination why an individual should serve family, community, or species. By denying the possibility of some standard of extraordinary individuality or heroic virtue that can be shared in common, Darwin—surely against his intention—leads us to believe that the only way an individual can find evidence of his distinctiveness is by "set[ting] the murderous Machiavel to school" and not being governed by the herd morality of the decent suckers around him. That evidence of "transcendence," of course, is not completely satisfying, but it's better than nothing. It should go without saying, at this point, that Darwin cannot comprehend Machiavelli or all the extraordinary behavior he inspired to replace impersonal evolution with individual freedom. It takes a student of manliness like Mansfield to recognize why being Machiavelli is a significant evolutionary advantage.

Human beasts have the capacity to change nature in accord with their "championism" or sense of self-importance. Darwin for his part cannot explain why we shouldn't intervene in the evolutionary process if we can, and that is the deepest reason, Holloway claims, that "Darwinian conservatism" is an oxymoron. Our species emerged accidentally, and there is no particular reason it deserves to last. The other species come and go, and their particular beasts are just playthings in the process. But all the Darwinian lullabies in the world cannot transform the fact that only the beasts with speech are smart enough to experience themselves as accidents and feel insecure and unimportant as a result. If Darwin is right about nature's utter indifference to my longings as a transcendent, noble individual, why shouldn't I work for a change?

Mansfield explains that it is no accident that the first explicitly atheistic regimes in the world were totalitarian, and Wolfe reminds us in his essay about the soul's disappearance of Nietzsche's prophetic prediction that God's death would lead both to the "total eclipse of all values" and "the age of total war." The reaction to the conclusions of Darwin and Nietzsche that God is dead and nature means nothing, as Mansfield says, was manliness "run amok"—the horrifically cruel pursuit of impossible historical goals. The fanatically manly totalitarians found what satisfaction they could in struggle itself; in their nihilistic response to nihilism, they preferred war, murder, and cruelty to any effective result. But today, even the Darwinians can say with some satisfaction that human nature triumphed over those insane efforts to make it into something else.

Having seemed to return to the relative sobriety of modern science, we now can see that the biotechnological enhancement of our accidental natural gifts might actually work. The biotechnological promise is that we will be enabled to enhance our individuality by allowing each individual to design himself however he pleases; we will transcend our biological limitations by bringing the body completely under individual control. Biotechnology also promises to make us feel more happy and secure—and so much less in need of manly assertiveness

to establish and defend our identities. Perhaps it is best understood as potentially the most effective tool yet in the modern project of "rational control," the project of properly securing the individual by bringing manliness to an end.

Holloway's fine rhetorical opposition to the biotechnological project is itself full of manliness. Today's wimpy democratic citizens, in his view, increasingly feel that real struggle and suffering are intolerable. Their indifference to real human dignity, to the "strength of soul" that is the source of our singular ability "to endure suffering and exertion in pursuit of moral excellence," has burgeoned. They are increasingly satisfied with anonymous lives of "ease and comfort." So they are all for the exploitation of every biotechnological opportunity to extend their easy lives indefinitely, to free themselves as much as possible from difficulty and risk. And they will embrace the mood control that "neuropharmacology and genetic engineering" will make increasingly possible: they're all for silencing the boredom, anxiety, and restlessness "that otherwise would alert them to the unworthiness of the goals they so ardently and unhappily seek." They want to leave their manliness or genuine individuality behind.

Holloway, real man that he is, exaggerates the importance of what human beings may or may not do in our time through biotechnology. Mansfield is more sanguine, thinking that manliness—courageous confidence in the face of risk—will be more indispensable than ever for handling the inevitable failures in all our efforts at "rational control." And Wolfe, the novelist, is more attentive to the many ways in which status or ranking still shape human behavior in our officially egalitarian time. The assertive individuals struggling to be "playas" and "aristo-meritocrats" who inhabit *I Am Charlotte Simmons* (and, of course, those in *A Man in Full*) are not Nietzsche's Last Men. They are not the nice and apathetic, flat-souled students that Allan Bloom described. The beast with speech does transform evolution with his own importance in mind; but his "nuclear" capability, as far as I can see, does not include the ability to turn himself into a beast basically like all the others.

The individual lacks the power, in fact, to make Darwinian sociobiology true—or, for that matter, to turn himself into a god whose rational will completely controls nature and human nature. All our power, as the ancients taught, will not make us wise—although men will, in order to display their excellence, continue to exaggerate what they really know. Thinking about manliness as a cause of the behavior of the only beast who exists—because of his speech—between the other beasts and God should give us confidence in the real and permanent existence of the human individual. Men, thank God, can't help but both want to be, and to be, important.