

GEORGE WASHINGTON AND THE WHIG CONCEPTION OF HEROIC LEADERSHIP*

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Before George Washington had a chance to display his skill in pitched battle, he became a focal point for the rage militaire that swept through America in 1775. The quality of the public's perception of Washington at this time is documented mainly through public addresses and accounts in the colonial press. By the end of the Revolutionary War, however, Washington had been transformed from a military hero into the new republic's great moral symbol. This transformation is studied by looking at Washington's wartime conduct in light of a political culture that fostered intense suspicion of all forms of power and a belief in "virtue" as an antidote for man's innate corruptibility. Refusing time and again to convert his military prestige into political power, Washington personified the heroic archetype of the Anglo-American Whig tradition. This conclusion is documented by an analysis of eulogies delivered on the occasion of Washington's death. In these eulogies we find the very antithesis of Max Weber's formulation of charismatic leadership. Since charisma theory is applicable to only one type of heroic leader, namely, the gifted authoritarian who seeks radical change, an alternative conception, applicable to hero worship in the conservative republican tradition, is presented.

No figure in American history has been esteemed more highly during his own lifetime than George Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army and first President of the United States. Since Washington's death, every generation of Americans has found it necessary to reassess his personal character and the events of his public career.

This effort has produced a literature that is positively overwhelming. But while the facts of Washington's life have been documented in excruciating detail, little is explicitly known about why that life was the object of such intense veneration.

Existing statements relating to Washington's prestige fall into two categories. Authoritative biographical accounts, from Washington Irving and Jared Sparks to Douglas Freeman and James Flexner, supply abundant description of Washington's personal qualities and achievements.¹ The accounts never tell us,

however, why these qualities and achievements were invested with such significance. A second group of writings portrays Washington as a monument or symbol of his age (see, for example, Cunliffe, 1958; Boorstin, 1965; Fishwick, 1954; Wright, 1955). Unfortunately, the writers never get around to providing us with convincing evidence of precisely what he symbolized during the different phases of his public career. After almost 200 years of biography and commentary, then, we remain uncertain about the bases of the enormous prestige accorded to Washington by his contemporaries.

This paper adds nothing to what is already known about the life of Washington but rather takes the fact of his veneration and examines its changing qualities in the context of late eighteenth-century American society. The main premise of the paper is that Washington's great prestige is not constituted by its existence at any one moment in time, but is the unsettled result of constantly shifting social concerns and definitions. As will be shown, the initial expression of praise for Washington took place in the context of great political resentment and military fervor. Washington symbolized these sentiments in his role as military commander. By the end of the war, however, the public's attention shifted from military to political concerns, and it was against this new background

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¹ Sparks's life of Washington was published in 1835; the first of Irving's volumes appeared in 1855. For a survey of earlier and later biographical works, up to 1935, see O'Neill (1935:155-76). Of the many

lives of Washington published since 1935, Freeman's and Flexner's are the most comprehensive. The initial volumes of these works appeared in 1948 and 1965 respectively.

that Washington was transformed from a military hero into the nation's great moral symbol. To show how and why this transformation occurred is to throw better light on one neglected variety of heroic leadership.

VARIETIES OF HEROIC LEADERSHIP

Heroic leadership is a form of domination which evokes strong reverential sentiment in the context of fateful enterprises, campaigns, and movements. The heroic leader, then, is not any leader who is revered because of the authority or the personal qualities he possesses, but one who uses these attributes to mobilize people for strenuous efforts to change or maintain existing cultural values and institutional structures.

Max Weber's conception of charismatic leadership deals with only one type of heroic leadership—the great men whom Weber considers are dedicated exclusively to radical change: "In a revolutionary and sovereign manner," he says, "charismatic domination transforms all values and breaks all traditional and rational norms" (Weber, 1968b:1115). Weber's charismatic leader is also an authoritarian leader. His influence "knows of no abstract legal codes" but rather stems from his godlike personal strength, to which his followers are duty-bound to submit (Weber, 1968b:1113, 1115). When charisma does take a democratic course, it usually leads to "Caesarism," or charismatic dictatorship (Weber, 1968a:266–71). Indeed, Dorothy Emmett (1958:233) goes so far as to suggest "that there is something rather Teutonic, suggesting the *Führer-Prinzip*, about Weber's description." (See also Schlesinger, 1963:10.)

Closely related to Emmett's observation are the extraordinary talents of the charismatic leader: those qualities of his "individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities" (Weber, 1968a:241). Of course, Max Weber did not ignore the social context inside of which these powers are exercised. He was explicit about the followers' perception of the leader's "gift of grace" as being decisive for the validity of charisma. He was aware of the part played by social crises—particularly those which result in a political and/or normative vacuum—in the inducement of such a perception. On the other hand, the personal virtuosity of the leader is the central and prior element in Weber's formulation. Emerging in the midst of structural conflict and psychological ambiguity, the charismatic leader satisfies the need for a new order by exercising extraordinary personal

power (Weber, 1968a:242, 1968b:1111–12, 1114).

Charismatic leadership is an historically important form of domination;² however, it contributed nothing to the American struggle for independence. The American revolution, as has been frequently noted, was a conservative uprising which aspired not to the creation of a new order but to the restoration of previously held rights and liberties. It was to this objective that George Washington committed himself. Washington, therefore, did not employ his talents (which were somewhat less than extraordinary) in a situation of chaotic disorder, nor did he advocate alternatives to the prevailing political ideology. As a staunch conservative (Padover, 1955), he was devoted to the preservation rather than the radical change of his society's political culture. Moreover, Washington's leadership contained no authoritarian elements; he distinguished himself not by feats performed to acquire power but by the length he went to avoid power, and by the enthusiasm with which he relinquished the power vested in him by his countrymen.

Although George Washington was not a charismatic leader, he was the object of the most intense display of hero worship this nation has ever seen (Wector, 1941:99–147). By understanding the basis of his great attraction, we learn something about a form of heroic leadership which is quite different from that described by Weber. What is ultimately at stake in such an understanding is the resolution of an enduring structural dilemma: the contradiction between reverence for individual leaders and the ideas of democracy (Hook, 1943:229–45). Let me restate this broader aspect of the problem in the appropriate historical context.

Heroic Leadership and Democracy

The model of government to which the revolutionary American was committed, says Gordon Wood (1969:18), "possessed a compelling simplicity: politics was nothing more than a perpetual battle between the passions of the rulers, whether one or a few, and the united interest of the people—an opposition that was both inevitable and proportional." Of the words used to express this attitude in the late colonial period, those of the early eighteenth-century ideologist, Thomas Gordon, were among the most widely read. "Without giving his People Liberty," wrote Gordon, "[the Governor] cannot make them happy; and by

² For inquiries into the part played by charismatic leadership in the recent emergence of new states in the Third World, see Apter, 1963; Dow, 1968; Fagan, 1965; Friedland, 1964; Runciman, 1963.

giving them Liberty, he gives up his own Power. So that . . . whatever is good for the People is bad for their Governors, and what is good for the Governors, is pernicious to the People" (Trenchard and Gordon, [1733] 1969:256). Assuming that hero worship cannot be generated in a society whose definition of power relations precludes strong personal authority and impassioned loyalties to a leader (Willner, 1968:4), we find ourselves faced with two problems. Not only must we ascertain the nature of the heroic leadership which emerged during the American Revolution; we must also determine how any notion of heroic leadership could have been conceived, let alone realized, at that time. Specifically, we will be concerned to know how, and why, a cult of veneration formed around one man in a culture that was explicitly disdainful of the glorification of personality, a culture in which complete deference to higher authority was ridiculed and every form of power deliberately and systematically scrutinized. We want to know how this barrier to hero worship was overcome.

AN UNCHARISMATIC HERO

That George Washington was virtually deified by his generation is certain; but there is no apparent reason why he should have been. Although Washington was, by any standard, intelligent and accomplished, he was neither a brilliant nor a self-confident man, nor was his experience (which did not include leadership of large armies) precisely suited to the needs of his time. Upon his appointment as commander of the Continental Army, therefore, Washington did not promise victory. He did not seek to embolden his followers by rattling his saber or by otherwise affirming the strength of his leadership. "Lest some unlucky event should happen," he warned, "I beg it may be remembered, by every gentleman in this room, that I, this day, declare with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the command I am honored with" (Washington, 1931a:292). Washington's expression of modesty was not just meant for public consumption. To Patrick Henry, he privately expressed the fear that his appointment would "date my fall, and the ruin of my reputation" (Freeman, 1968:220).

Washington's diffidence proved not to be unfounded. His own eulogists admit that his armies suffered "a succession of disasters and retreats," partly through his own mistakes, and that "it many not be said of him as of Marlborough, that 'he never formed the plan of a campaign that he did not execute; never besieged a city that he did not take; never fought a battle that he did not gain'" (Daniel, [1876] 1903:274).

Unlike some of his "self-made" contemporaries, Washington's native capacities could not overcome his limited military and political experience. "His mind was great and powerful," says Thomas Jefferson ([1814] 1926:188-89); but that mind, he adds, was not "of the very first order . . . It was slow in operation, being little aided by invention or imagination but sure in conclusion." In peace as well as war, therefore, Washington depended heavily on his advisors (Winthrop, [1876] 1903:251). During his first term as President, he confessed to James Madison that "he had from the beginning found himself deficient in many of the essential qualifications" for office (cited in Charles, 1956:40). The great man was also aware of his own intellectual shortcomings, making reference on more than one occasion to his "inferior endowments from nature."

Not even personal magnetism, which is often an important basis of public veneration, could be claimed by Washington. As a writer, he was fluent but lacked elegance; as a speaker, he "never outgrew a heavy, somewhat clumsy manner" (Wector, 1941:102). In addition, he was not magnanimous toward shortcomings in others. His was a heart, in Jefferson's ([1814] 1926:189) words, "not warm in its affections." As a general, for instance, Washington commanded more respect than devotion. He believed in discipline and used the whip, gallows, and his own pistol (Flexner, 1967:46-7, 110) to enforce it. "His deeds of severity," pleads one of his eulogists (Mason, 1800:12), "were his sad tribute to justice." To social equals as well as his soldiers Washington was "the archetypal stranger" (Albanese, 1976:145): stern, distant, and glacial. "Today I dined with the President," wrote Sedgwick, "and as usual the company was as grave as at a funeral" (Charles, 1956:38).

I will discuss later the more appealing of Washington's personal traits. His less attractive sides have been stressed now only to make the point that he was a man not unlike other men, and that other leaders of the Revolution were at least as well endowed with talent and charm as he. But to argue thus is only to affirm what hero worship entails: not the *recognition* of greatness but the *transformation*, by social definition, of the ordinary into the heroic. If we are to understand this transformation, we must place it in proper context. Statements about Washington must be matched by statements about the central needs and concerns of his society.³

³ There were central or modal tendencies in the veneration of Washington and the concerns of his society. The correspondence between these tenden-

HOW THE CULT EMERGED

In May 1775, shortly after fighting broke out at Lexington and Concord, the Second Continental Congress assembled. The public was in an excited mood. That same road on which Washington and the Virginia delegation had passed unnoticed six months earlier was now thick with onlookers. When he arrived in Philadelphia, Washington learned that he had been assigned as military advisor to New York. Several weeks later, word leaked out that he was under consideration for the general command. If that were actually to fall upon him, however, it would be through "no desire or insinuation" of his own. He even induced his friend and fellow delegate, Pendleton, to argue publically against him. Nevertheless, the conditions of the day made Washington's appointment almost inevitable.

In its Declaration of the Causes of Taking Up Arms, Congress emphasized "We mean not to dissolve the union which has so long and so happily subsisted between us." Combining a plea for reconciliation with a threat of armed resistance, this document embodied, if it did not precisely state, the ambivalence of Congress toward its relationship with Great Britain. On the horns of this dilemma hung the choice of Washington as military commander. Proponents of reconciliation could support Washington because they knew his political position was compatible with (if not as optimistic as) their own. Proponents of separation could support him because he was a Southerner and his appointment would lend more favor to the military option, which was central to their policy.

The quality of the command given to Washington was strongly affected by uncertainty within Congress. No decision had been made by Congress that directly brought the thirteen colonies into the war being fought in New England. No continental army had been raised. There was not even a nation to fight for (the Declaration of Independence came a year later). There was only Washington, and it was to Washington, personally, that Congress pledged itself: "[T]his Congress doth now declare that they will maintain and assist him and adhere to him, the said George Washington, Esq., with their lives and fortunes . . ." And so from the moment he took command, says Flexner (in an unmistakably Durkheimian tone), "Washington was more than a military

leader: he was the eagle, the standard, the flag, the living symbol of the cause" (1965:339).

Washington's ascension to national honor was abrupt. On his way to Boston, where the Massachusetts militia had already begun to hem in the British occupying force, he was repeatedly delayed by enthusiastic crowds. Symbols of his adoration emerged before he even did anything. While Washington was still encamped in Boston, and before even a shot was fired on his command, books were dedicated to him, children were named after him, and ships were named after both him and his wife (*Massachusetts Gazette*, October 30, 1775, March 4, 18, 1776, April 1, 1776, January 29, 1977; *Virginia Gazette*, October, 1775; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 7, 14, 1776). In March, 1776, the British (outgunned but not defeated) withdrew their troops from Boston. Before seeing a demonstration of Washington's military skill in pitched battle, Congress voted him a gold medal (Washington, 1931b:488-90) and his praises were sung throughout the land. The local homage was especially keen. The Massachusetts Assembly presented to Washington an address which praised his achievements. Harvard, in its turn, voted him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (*Boston Gazette*, April 8, 15, 1776).

There was no letup in veneration when the real battles sent the now "godlike Washington" and his men reeling southward in defeat. "Celebrations of his birthday [were held] while he was still the harassed commander of a lank, losing army" (Fishwick, 1954:40).

Washington as Symbolic Leader

In the introduction to one of his six volumes on the life of Washington, Douglas Southall Freeman concedes that "the transformation of the quiet Virginia planter into the revered continental commander is beyond documentary explanation" (1951:xiii). Freeman's statement points to the need for a theory that seeks to account for the onset of Washington's virtual deification. To this end, Emile Durkheim ([1912] 1965:243-44) supplies a point of departure:

[I]n the present day just as much as in the past, we see society constantly creating sacred things out of ordinary ones. If it happens to fall in love with a man and if it thinks it has found in him the principal aspirations that move it, as well as the means of satisfying them, this man will be raised above the others and, as it were, deified. . . . And the fact that it is society alone which is the author of these varieties of apotheosis, is evident since it frequently chances to conse-

cies, as they evolved over time, is the main topic of this paper. A proper treatment of the variability in attitudes toward Washington, and of the social needs and concerns unique to different parts of his society, must be given elsewhere.

crate men thus who have no right to it from their own merit.

As a prototype of the "symbolic leader" which Durkheim describes, Washington offered not "representation without mastery" (as Martin Spencer [1973:350-51] would put it), but rather more representation than mastery (for a more contemporary example, see Dow, 1968.) But what, precisely, did Washington represent during the initial phase of his career? What were the "principal aspirations" that Washington, despite his setbacks, seemed so well to satisfy?

The Rage Militaire

The abruptness and intensity of Washington's veneration after his appointment as military commander must be understood in the context of American attitudes toward the war itself. Although Washington doubted his own capacities to lead the colonies to victory, the prevalent opinion among those who favored armed resistance was not so pessimistic. Past experience had already shown the great logistical problems of European armies fighting on American soil and the dissenters felt that they could exploit this disadvantage (Buel, 1980:38). But what really motivated the Americans were religious sentiments, not technical considerations. Before Washington's appointment there had already been several skirmishes with the British, and in most of these (at Great Bridge, Nantucket, Hog Island, Gloucester, Ticonderoga, Lexington, and Boston), the Americans gave a good account of themselves. These small victories inspired confidence largely because the press and pulpit ascribed to them a religious significance. In Charles Royster's (1979:13) words, "One source of the revolutionaries' confidence lay in their obedience to God. A religious vocabulary voiced many of the calls to serve in the Continental Army and to promote its cause. . . . God intended His punishment of war-makers only for Britons, and He entrusted its execution to Americans. . . . This explanation obviously allowed only one outcome—American victory." While Royster exaggerates the optimism of the Americans, his statement has the merit of not underestimating it. Royster also succeeds in capturing the prevailing belief in providential intervention, well expressed in Elbridge Gerry's (1775) declaration that history could "hardly produce such a series of events as has taken place in favor of American opposition. The hand of Heaven seems to have directed every occurrence" (Albanese, 1976:83; for detail on the American "legend of providential intervention," including its use in the Revolution, see Hay, 1969a).

Associated with this religious conviction was a political climate of "hysterical and emotional ideas . . . inflammatory phrases . . . fear and frenzy, exaggeration and enthusiasm" (Wood, 1968:70, 73), all related to a strong belief in the existence of a Ministerial conspiracy to enslave the colonies (Bailyn, 1965:86-89) and a conviction that British forces were bent on a campaign of plunder and rape (Davidson, [1941] 1973; Kerr, 1962:106-7). In this context, the Americans indulged themselves in a *rage militaire* which, according to one correspondent, "took possession of the whole continent" by spring, 1775—the time of Washington's appointment. At this time, reports from Philadelphia indicated that "the city has turned out 4,000 men, 300 of whom are Quakers. Every County in our Province is awakened and several thousand Riflemen on our frontiers are in readiness to march down to our assistance . . ." Scholarly John Adams estimated that Philadelphia turned out "two thousand every day" and, after indicating that he himself was reading military books, announced "Everyone must, and will, and shall be a soldier." Abigail Adams concurred, describing the sound of cannon as "one of the grandest in nature, and is of the true species of the sublime." Another observer reports: "By accounts from all parts of the country, we find, that they are everywhere learning the use of arms, and seem determined on Liberty or Death. . . . It is impossible to describe the military ardor which now prevails." Given the divine sponsorship of the resistance, America's newfound military fervor was amplified by pronouncements from the pulpit. As one minister warned, "When God, in his providence, calls to take the sword, if any refuse to obey, Heaven's dread artillery is levelled against him. . . . Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood." Other clergymen appeared before their congregations in full military uniform to sign recruits, before taking the field themselves. (See Royster, 1979:25; Albanese, 1976:101; Davidson, [1941] 1973:206; *Georgia Gazette*, May 31, 1775. For additional description of the 1775 "war psychosis," see Buel, 1980:36-38; Scheer and Rankin, 1957:65-66.)

By the end of the first year of the war, the *rage militaire* had dissipated. Still, the early craze was repeatedly invoked as a moral standard, part of the golden age when martial enthusiasm was everywhere joined to a zealous commitment to self-sacrifice (Royster, 1979:31). But if Americans were to feel initially and later fondly recall this intangible sense of "collective effervescence," they would need to connect that sentiment and that recollection to something hard and visible. In Durkheim's ([1912] 1965:251) words:

[We] are unable to consider an abstract entity. For we can represent only laboriously and confusedly the source of the strong sentiments which we feel. We cannot explain them to ourselves except by connecting them to some concrete object of whose reality we are vividly aware.

In essence, this is what Marshall Fishwick (1954:40) meant when, of the situation in 1775, he said, "Most Americans were hungry for a living symbol of their revolt."

The hunger, of course, explained neither the choice nor the legitimacy of the symbol. The symbol was in fact chosen and legitimated by Congress. Washington (along with all general officers selected by Congress) acquired instant legitimacy because his appointment came out of an honored process of reconciling regional interests and opinions. While the contemporary mind does not see this as a very good way to choose a commanding general, Americans of the revolutionary period saw things differently.

The Meaning of Republican Military Leadership

A few months after Washington received his commission, there appeared the immensely popular "New Song," whose very first stanza makes use of the new military commander as a symbol for the colonies' martial sentiments: "Since WE your brave sons, insens'd, our swords have goaded on,/Huzza, huzza, huzza, huzza for WAR and WASHINGTON" (*Virginia Gazette*, February 24, 1776). Likewise, comments on Washington's "vast military experience" and "genius" were scattered throughout the major newspapers of the day. But these kinds of statements, both poetical and prosaic, derived from an overheated emotional climate and did not capture the full complexity of what Washington meant to his contemporaries at the beginning of the war.

Washington, of course, meant different things to different people. For some of his contemporaries, experience and genius were the most important qualifications for the command, and on this basis those who disdained Washington's military competence tried to justify themselves. The most important element of this criticism, however, was its secrecy. Washington's detractors expressed themselves mainly through private correspondence rather than through formal petition to Congress (see Freeman, 1968:366-83). The critics felt they were in a minority, and they were right. For most Americans, the radically instrumental reasoning of Washington's antagonists would have made little sense.

The Americans' intuitive distrust of all political authority, especially standing armies,

led them to see military genius as a particularly dangerous quality. To be sure, they wanted a soldier to help express their defiance of "the Ministry," but they wanted no part of a professional soldier. Just a few weeks after his appointment, Washington was personally addressed by the New York Congress: "[We] have the fullest assurances that whenever this important contest shall be decided . . . you will cheerfully resign the important deposit committed into your hands, and re-assume the character of our worthy citizen" (*Virginia Gazette*, July 14, 1775). Lacking tested institutional constraints on the ambitions of strong leaders,⁴ and with the everpresent examples of Caesar and Cromwell to justify anxieties about the imposition of dictatorship, Americans at war looked not to their best military man for direction but to the military man in whom they had the most trust. One commentator thus justifies his preference for a native-born commander over the superbly trained and experienced Charles Lee, declaring that "the colonies are not so wrapped up in General Lee's military accomplishments as to give him preference . . ." (*Virginia Gazette*, May, 1775). Acutely suspicious of the aspirations of men in power, the colonials were unwilling to base their main judgment of any leader on "mere" technical skill.

American attitudes toward Washington were shaped by another, more positive, conception regarding military leadership. Believing firmly in their divine covenant and in their own "native courage," Americans looked to the military commander (and to "rulers" in general [McKeen, 1800:7, 18]) mainly for exemplary leadership and inspiration. Ironically, the tremendous prestige accorded Washington was initially based on the conviction that the war would be won (indeed, could only be won) by the righteous willfulness of the republican soldier. The great general was seen as one who, by firmness rather than brilliance of mind, harnesses and directs the citizen-soldier's supposed virtue (for detail, see Royster, 1979). This attitude was such as to lift from Washington's shoulders some of the re-

⁴ Although Congress was empowered to appoint and dismiss officers, many doubted its ability to use that power to dismiss a popular officer—especially one whose prestige would eventually become, in Fishwick's (1954:40) words, "greater than the prestige of the United States government." As a matter of fact, Congress's power over any officer was called into question by the Newburgh revolt, which was checked not by Congress itself but through the personal influence that Washington exerted on its behalf. In this respect, it may be said that the Articles of Confederation, designed to limit the authority and dignity of Congress, worked too well.

sponsibility for the outcome of his military encounters. If the victories of war result from the character of the men who fight, defeats (of which there were many) cannot be attributed to the leader alone.⁵ What mattered in the leader was motivation, and the Americans hastened to acknowledge its priority. "[Concerning] the affairs of Long Island and Fort Washington," explains one commentator, "I intend no reflection on the judgement of the general officers whose opinions may have been the foundation of those disasters, for their opinions certainly proceeded from a spirit of enterprise and true intrepidity, a spirit which, I trust, will never be severely condemned by us, however it may fail of success" (*Virginia Gazette*, January 17, 1777).

Prevailing religious ideas complement this attitude. From covenant theology were drawn images of the Exodus and these furnished a "conceptual archetype" by which many Americans understood the significance of the war. Citizens of the "New Israel" knew that Moses, the leader of their spiritual predecessors, overcame his enemies not by destroying them but by preserving his followers from annihilation. Not by his own powers did he do so, but by the force of the Covenant. Correspondingly, the military retreats of the "American Moses" (for detail, see Hay, 1969b) were defined by many as either disasters occasioned by the displeasure of God and followed by public penance, or great acts of deliverance, followed by prayers of gratitude. (For detail on these religious practices, which customarily followed crises of any kind, see Kerr, 1962:59-89.)

In brief, the earliest manifestation of worship of "godlike Washington" did not depend—could not have depended—on technical genius. It emerged in the context of society's need to articulate and make concrete the fervent emotions of its citizens and the intangible virtues of its cause. And it was in the context of this need that Washington became the living symbol of the Revolution.⁶

⁵ In hindsight, Washington could be attributed with more responsibility for the outcome of the war. Although confidence in the civic virtue of the republican citizen and soldier was strong during the war's initial phase, it petered out as the war dragged on. Enlistment and discipline problems, mass desertions, outright disloyalty, as well as civilian unwillingness to lend all-out support for the war, gradually eroded the Americans' belief that they were "republicans by nature." Against this background of apathy, treachery, and half-hearted gestures, examples of genuine devotion to the cause stood out in bold relief. By war's end, this devotion was nowhere better exemplified than in Washington's conduct.

⁶ The context was of course not exhausted by this

WASHINGTON AS A SYMBOL OF WHIG VALUES

The meaning of the Washington symbol eventually connected itself with stable cultural forms already established in the American mind. If the war effectively disposed of the substance of monarchy, the cult of the monarchy could be preserved and exploited by a new republic. The last stanza of the previously mentioned "New Song," written at the beginning of the war, concludes: "And George, his minions trembling round, dismounted from his throne/ Pay homage to America and glorious WASHINGTON." Throughout the war itself, the King's statutes and portraits were torn down; Washington's were immediately put up in their place (Cunliffe, 1958:13). The tune of the traditional anthem "God Save the King" remained the same; however, its lyrics were changed to "God Save Great Washington." By the end of the war (1783), Washington had replaced the monarch as America's base of symbolic orientation.

The prestige conferred upon Washington during the Revolutionary War was more than just a form of "expressive symbolism"; it was an interest-gathering deposit later drawn upon to sanctify the presidency (for detail see Freeman, 1968:549-50; Rossiter, 1956:76; Main, [1961] 1974:141; Charles, 1956:37-38). On the other hand, the social context and basis for Washington's election to the presidency in 1789 were not the same as for his military appointment in 1775. During this interval, the public perception of Washington underwent a profound change. As newly appointed military commander, Washington supplied the nation with a focal point for its military fervor. By the end of the war, however, Washington was the nation's central moral symbol. To understand this transformation, and to learn precisely what moral values he symbolized to those who

one need. There were others. During the Revolutionary War, the integration of competing regional, political, and economic interests under a single government was high on the list of American concerns. The war itself raised this colonial society to a higher level of integration, which was eventually formalized by federal charter; however, the solidarity thus achieved was fragmentary and tentative. It was this condition—the still precarious state of political union—which intensified America's search for symbols of nationality and tradition. In a separate paper, I am considering these two quests in relation to Washington's veneration and exploring the respects in which he helped satisfy his society's need for symbols of union and nationhood. But this need does not explain why Washington was initially embraced as a national hero; nor does it explain what values he eventually came to symbolize, or why he came to symbolize them.

elected him president and to those who supported that election, we need to know something about the political culture of the Revolution.

Whiggery and the Revolution

The ideology of the American Revolution drew from many sources, including Enlightenment rationalism, English Common Law, New England Puritanism, and classical antiquity. These last two sources provide many of the metaphors or "model types" through which the veneration of George Washington was expressed. From Puritanism derives the notion of Washington as the "American Moses"; from the classics comes the notion of Washington as *Pater Patriae*, "Cincinnatus of the West," and so forth. However, neither Puritanism nor classicism (nor rationalism or common law) contribute directly to the veneration of Washington, or even to the ideology of the Revolution itself. As Bailyn (1965:23) puts it, "they are everywhere illustrative, not determinative, of thought." The concepts and "root metaphors" supplied by these traditions were used to express the ideals of one branch of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century whiggery.⁷ Whether we document this connection through Colbourn's (1965) inventory of the libraries of the American colonies and founding fathers, or Bailyn's (1965) study of the political pamphlets distributed in the colonies during the eighteenth century, the influ-

ence of the radical social and political thought of the "Real Whigs" (John Trenchard, Thomas Gordon, Benjamin Hoadly, Robert Molesworth, Viscount Bolingbroke, and other interpreters and popularizers of Locke) is beyond dispute. "More than any other single group of writers" says Bailyn (1965:19), these Englishmen "shaped the mind of the American Revolutionary generation."

Developed further by a new generation of writers, the ideals of the Real Whigs (which never evoked much interest in England) were embraced by most Americans before and after the Revolutionary War. "Before the revolution," said Jefferson, "we were all good Whigs, cordial in free principles . . . jealous of the executive Magistrate." During the revolution, the consensus was less perfect. Many colonists of whig persuasion were indifferent to the American cause and some remained loyal to the crown (Benton, 1969).⁸ John Adams's statement, therefore, is the more precise: "In political theory, if not devotion to the patriot cause, nine tenths of the people are high Whigs" (Rossiter, 1953:143, 353). To explain which of George Washington's personal characteristics and achievements had the most significance for his countrymen, and to show why the veneration of these qualities eventually became so intense, persistent, and widespread, an understanding of whig theory, especially the doctrines of "power" and "virtue," is necessary.

The Bane of Power

The disposition of power was central to every political controversy before, during, and after

⁷ The word whig derives from *Whiggamore*, which was originally applied to the poorer rural peasant of western Scotland. In 1648, the Presbyterians who marched on Edinburgh to seize control of the government from the Royalist Party were designated as whigs, as were both the "exclusioners" who opposed the succession of the Catholic James II to the throne and those who overthrew him in the Glorious Revolution of 1689. However, William of Orange, whom the whigs placed in power, was indifferent to their support, and his successor, Anne, relied on Tory ministers. Not until the accession of the Hanoverian line in 1714 did the 46-year whig oligarchy begin. Distinguishing themselves from their nominal counterparts in Parliament (by whom they were vastly outnumbered), the Real Whigs denounced the shortcomings of the Glorious Revolution and the Hanoverian monarchs. Limitations on the crown were proposed and justified by asserting the values of (pre-Norman) Saxon democracy. The old Gothic limits on power were construed to be the institutional ancestor of Parliament itself. Real Whigs believed that the viability of this "constitution" depended on the virtues and self-restraint of rulers as well as common citizens. From their perception of ambition and venality in high places, the whigs concluded that this constitution had been betrayed (Robbins, 1959; Colbourn, 1965:3-56; Wood, 1969:3-45).

⁸ During the early phase of the war, most Americans were probably ambivalent about separation from Great Britain. In fact, Washington himself toasted the Crown and flew a Union Jack flag from the time of his appointment as commanding general to the time of the issuance of the Declaration of Independence. On the other hand, support for the policy of separation was considerable, and one reason for this support is that proponents of the "patriot cause" enjoyed almost absolute control over the press (Davidson, [1941] 1973:226). As it turns out, this monopoly was instrumental in containing the propagation of anti-Washington sentiments. The actual extent of these sentiments is difficult to ascertain, since positive as well as negative statements about Washington were made by the hard-line Tories (Borden and Borden, 1972:57-59, 61). As for the few Tory newspapers, they did what they could to undermine the deification of the American commander (to whom they often referred as "Mr." Washington), but eventually acknowledged his esteem by printing their propaganda messages over his name (see, for example, *Georgia Royal Gazette*, March 22, 1781).

the Revolutionary War. Whatever his attitude toward independence, power was dwelt upon by the eighteenth-century American "endlessly, almost compulsively" (Bailyn, 1965:38), for its natural prey was individual liberty. The issue was discussed with passion and metaphoric elegance. Power has "an encroaching nature"; it "creeps by degrees and quick subdues the whole." Power is "elastic," ever extending itself. The hand of power is "grasping" and "tenacious"; what it seizes it retains. Power is gluttonous: "restless, aspiring, insatiable," a jaw "always open to devour," an appetite "whetted, not cloyed, by possession." These concerns, as Main ([1961] 1974:127) and Kenyon (1955) make clear, became more acute as the years passed, and they preoccupied political and public discourse during the Constitutional Convention (of which Washington himself was president).

What makes power so malignant is not its intrinsic force, the prudent use of which was considered quite necessary for social order, but rather the nature of man himself. On this assumption there was strong agreement. Neo-Calvinists and freethinkers alike were convinced that man is incapable of withstanding on his own the temptations of power. Corruption (defined as lust for self-aggrandizement) is inherent in the species. "Such is the depravity of mankind," explains Samuel Adams, "that the ambition and lust of power above the law are predominant passions in the breasts of most men." Thus "Every man," says Thomas Allen, "by nature has the seeds of tyranny deeply implanted within him." From these premises flows "the strongest suspicion of men in authority" and a fear of the institutional weapons they control (Bailyn, 1965:41; Rossiter, 1953:372).

The Glory of Virtue

Beside the whigs' melancholy doctrine of power stands their cult of virtue. The Americans, whigs to the core, never tired of celebrating the noble "private virtues," such as justice, temperance, courage, honesty, sincerity, modesty, integrity, calmness, benevolence, sobriety, piety, rationality; nor did they let up in extolling the great "public virtues," e.g., love of liberty, disinterested attachment to the public good, self-sacrifice, moral action without external coercion. What is important about this list is its function, which, unlike its content, is historically unique. Early Americans politicized the traditional Roman and Christian virtues by defining them as the counterweight to man's lust for power. As Samuel Adams (1968:Vol. 4, 124-25) put it, "Virtue and Knowledge will forever be an even

Balance for Power and Riches." Thus is man saved from his own innate depravity.

Given the expansive quality of power, its division and balance was assumed to be the best structural guarantee of liberty. At the same time, whig theory taught that structures do not maintain themselves but rest ultimately on the qualities of the people who occupy positions within them. As one commentator explains, "He is the truest Friend to the Liberty of his Country, who tries most to promote its Virtue—And who so far as his Power and Influence extends, will not suffer a man to be chosen into any Office of Power and Trust, who is not a wise and virtuous Man" (*Boston Independent Advertiser*, May 29, 1749). Later, in the debate over the ratification of the Constitution in Virginia, James Madison declared, "No theoretical checks, no form of government can render us secure. To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in a people, is a chimerical idea" (cited in Rheinhold, 1977:8).

At a time when most Americans take for granted their government's ability to outlive its unscrupulous leaders and protect individual liberties, it is difficult to appreciate the whigish obsession about abuse of power, or to take seriously the conviction that government stands or falls on the virtues of its leaders. But in Washington's time these fears and these beliefs were felt with special poignancy. In particular, "the incantation of virtue," Meyer Rheinhold (1977:7) observes, "was most fervent during the uncertainties of the war and ensuing polemics over the Constitution." Against this background, we can better understand both the significance of Washington's veneration during the late-war and postwar period and the anxieties to which that veneration gave rise.

The Whig Hero

During the war, Washington was the most prestigious figure in the United States. However, the praise accorded him was not unambivalent. If the overwhelming and seemingly unconditional praise of Washington helped to mobilize the aspirations and sentiments of the rebelling colonists, it might also allow Washington to assume power outside the law and to use that power to impose his will upon others, with the help of the army. William Tudor expressed the concerns of many Americans when, in 1779, while speaking of Washington, he warned that "bondage is ever to be apprehended at the close of a successful struggle for liberty, when a triumphant army, elated with victories, and headed by a popular general may become more formidable than the tyrant

that has been expelled. . . . Witness the aspiring CROMWELL! . . . A free and wise people will never suffer any citizen to become too popular—much less too powerful. A man may be formidable to the constitution even by his virtues" (Tudor, 1779:8, 11).

In view of the political anxieties of the time, what Washington did not do during the final phase of his military career was more important than his positive accomplishments. As Daniel ([1876] 1903:274) later put it, "he left mankind bewildered with the splendid problem of whether to admire him most for what he was or what he would not be." Indeed, what Washington was *derived* from what he would not be. The facts of the matter are many and well known. The main point was recognized by Chastellux during his 1781 travels: "This is the seventh year that [Washington] has commanded the army, and that he has obeyed the Congress; more need not be said, especially in America, where they know how to appreciate all the merit contained in this simple fact" (Chinard, 1940:56). This observation was a sound one. Despite many wartime disagreements with Congress, Washington faithfully deferred to its policies and so affirmed the then cherished but not yet established principle of civilian control of the military. Despite his great popularity, which could have been used as a cushion against military setbacks and a weapon against Congress, Washington made it known to Congress that he was ready to resign his command at any time. Even more, he showed himself to be a great ally when Congress was itself in need. During the post-Yorktown crisis, when Washington could have easily taken over the government by military coup, he dissuaded his unpaid officers and men from taking action against the vulnerable and financially bankrupt government. And not only did Washington sternly rebuke those who wished to restore the monarchy around him; he hastened to surrender his military power at war's end and return to private life. Only the most persistent appeals of his countrymen could induce him later to renounce that life and accept the presidency. Ironically, it was this repeatedly demonstrated indifference to personal power which allowed Washington to become a stronger president than a more avaricious incumbent could have hoped to become. Given deep public distrust in the office, the presidential prerogatives on which he insisted, though they were all well within the Constitution, would probably not have been granted to a less trusted incumbent (Rossiter, 1956:85–87, 1959).

Against a background of almost paranoid concern over the use and usurpation of power, and an ideology which attributed to man an

inherent "corruption" or lust for power, it is no wonder that Washington was looked upon as the most extraordinary moral hero of his time. In those authoritarian contexts which give rise to the Weberian model of heroic leadership, it is the successful taking and exercise of power that evokes admiration; in late eighteenth-century America, it was just the opposite: refusal to assume power, and haste in giving it up, were the ingredients that went into political spectacles. (The extraordinary Annapolis ceremony, wherein Washington surrenders his commission to Congress, is the signal illustration of this point. [For eyewitness detail, see Burnett, 1934:Vol. 7, 394–95, 398–99].) Refusing under every condition to convert his prestige into political gain, Washington personified the heroic archetype implied by the Anglo-American whig tradition. Thus did he resolve the tension between heroic leadership and the tenets of republicanism. Thus did he allay the public's intense suspicion of power, a suspicion which might have otherwise handcuffed his and many subsequent governments.

Taking Stock of a Hero

The correspondence between the public's whiggish values and Washington's own conduct and beliefs⁹ does not in itself account for his enormous prestige during the postwar period. Proof of this connection can only be obtained by looking at Washington directly through the eyes of his contemporaries. The problem is to find the data that would enable us to do so.

While expression of praise for Washington was effusive during the postwar years, few

⁹ Washington's extraordinary sensitivity to the uses of power in a republic (Morgan, 1980) was at least partly attributable to his understanding of and belief in the whiggish ideals of the revolution. In an analysis of book holdings of the founding fathers, Colbourn (1965:153) points out that among the 900 volumes in Washington's library were the writings of Burgh, Macaulay, and other English whig ideologues. Indeed, Washington corresponded with Catherine Macaulay (a lady "whose principles are so much and so justly admired by the friends of liberty and of mankind" [Washington, 1938:174]) from 1785 until her death in 1791. Washington was acquainted not only with the whig writers but also with the classical literature from which these writers drew part of their own inspiration. One of Washington's favorite plays (and a favorite of many other whigs) was Addison's *Cato*. Likewise, Wood (1969:50) and Montgomery (1936, 1960) attribute some of Washington's most conspicuous virtues—restraint, temperance, fortitude, dignity, and independence—to his devotion to the perceived ideals of the Roman republic.

documents actually described the ultimate grounds of this praise. Letters sent back and forth among delegates to the Constitutional convention and among other influential citizens say much about the desirability of Washington as president but little about precisely *why* he should be elected. And while Washington's prestige grew during his first term as president, little was said to help us understand its source.¹⁰ Perhaps the first serious effort to make explicit the moral values personified in Washington was that of Parson Mason Locke Weems (1962). Weems's immensely popular biography, already completed in first edition form by 1799, was "sufficiently minute" on the military and political aspects of Washington's life and very expansive on "his Great Virtues." However, this production represents the perceptions of but one man. Not until Washington's death do we find a collective effort to articulate systematically the basis of his greatness. This effort is condensed in the funeral orations delivered during the last days of 1799 and the early months of 1800. Better than any single writing, this set of orations makes explicit what Washington meant to his contemporaries.

The 1799-1800 funeral eulogies did much to crystallize popular conceptions of Washington (Bryan, 1952:55). Authority of source is one reason why the eulogies were so influential. Among the men who delivered orations immediately after Washington's death were many ministers addressing religious congregations. These men were political as well as spiritual leaders and in their sermons we find every nuance of the dominant political faith (Rossiter, 1953:55; Kerr, 1962; for a summary of the political activities of many of these clergymen, see the *Dictionary of American Biography*). Political convictions are reflected in the whiggish vocabulary with which the clergy eulogized the fallen leader and in the clergy's whiggish preoccupation with the tension between ambition and virtue. This vocabulary, and the resolution of this tension, is expressed through reference to Washington's activities during and after the war.

¹⁰ Although his political views differed from those of the anti-Federalists and, later, the Republicans, vigorous public criticism of Washington (of which he was acutely sensitive) was actually infrequent. Antagonism toward Washington was probably greatest among the leaders of the Republican "faction" during his second term as President; however, their sentiments were not made public for fear of alienating most of the Republican constituency. As Thomas Jefferson complained, "Republicanism must lie on the oars, resign the vessel to its pilot, and themselves to the course he thinks best for them" (Flexner, 1969:276).

Eulogists hastened to point out that the civic virtue that Washington displayed during the war was motivated by his devotion to Providence, which had made him the instrument of Its plan, and not by his desire for gain after the war. Of the many proofs of his "disinterest," the most dramatic is the occasion on which he voluntarily resigned his commission to Congress. Whig ideologist and poet Jonathan Sewall (1799:12) declares:

Did he, like Caesar, after vanquishing his countrymen's foes, turn his conquering armies against that country? Far, far otherwise. Before the great Council of our Nation, the PATRIOT-HERO appeared, and in the presence of numerous, admiring spectators, resigned his victorious sword into the hands of those who gave it.

AUGUST Spectacle! Glorious Example!
For my own part, I never contemplate it but each fibre vibrates with rapture, and the vital current trembles through every artery of my frame!

In minds haunted by the dangerous specter of power, such ecstasies could be, and were, induced by any form of political diffidence. Central to the Washington cult's stock of knowledge, therefore, was not only the spectacle of his relinquishment of military power but also the certainty of his reluctance to assume political power.

From the presidency of the Constitutional Convention to the presidency of the United States, Washington is known to have assumed power with noble intention but little enthusiasm. Once established in high office, his main problem was not how to retain the position but how to relinquish it. Thus, having allowed himself to be twice elected to the presidency, only "the promulgation of his fixed resolution stopped the anxious wishes of an affectionate people from adding a third unanimous testimony of their unabated confidence" (Lee, 1800:13). This voluntary retirement from the presidency, says the Reverend Bancroft (a former Minute Man) "is the consummation of character; the last evidence of the greatness of the man" (1800:12). There is in all of this a certain contradiction: sacrifice is made, and temptation resisted, by both taking power and by giving it up. But such a violation of logic underscores the main point of the eulogy: that the ultimate grounds of Washington's veneration is not prowess, but morality; not achievement, but virtue. No better summation (or more effective continuation) of a century of whig political discourse could be conceived.

Conceptions of heroic leadership which emphasize talent and deed have little affinity with that which emerges from the Washington

eulogies. These are not centrally concerned with great exploits. If Washington's Achievements are celebrated, it is mainly because they allow us to gauge his character, and it is this inner merit which defines his greatness. In the words of Henry Holcombe, a minister and former officer in the Revolutionary army (1800:11), "He would have been equalled by several, if he had not shone in the mild majesty of morals." On this point most of the eulogies are emphatic. Fisher Ames (1800:130), a political leader and Biblical scholar, explains:

[It] requires thought and study to understand the true ground of the superiority of his character over many others, whom he resembled in the principles of action, and even in the manner of acting. But perhaps he excels all the greatness that ever lived, in the steadiness of his adherence to his maxims of life, and in the uniformity of all his conduct to these same maxims. . . . [If] there were any errors in his judgment, we know of no blemishes in his virtue. . . . He changed mankind's ideas of political greatness.

Considering the uniqueness of the republican ideals made animate by Washington, Samuel West, one of the most ardent of revolutionary whigs, agrees with Ames. "How widely different," West (1800:12) declares, "is this from what the world has been used to estimate as greatness."

To dramatize the nature of this contrast, Washington's eulogists looked for counterparts among history's great leaders and founders of states. (This tactic also served nationalistic interests by demonstrating the superiority of America's founding hero over the heroes of other states, present and past.) Since many Americans saw their new republic as a religious as well as a political entity (Albanese, 1976), eulogists sought and found positive counterparts to Washington in the sacred history of the Old Testament. Joshua, Gideon, Elijah, David, and, above all, Moses, were moral prototypes of the leader of the New Israel. Discussed in much more detail are the negative prototypes supplied by the whig interpretation of political history. The more recurrent comparisons are drawn between Washington and Alexander, Julius Caesar, Cromwell, Peter the Great, Frederick the Great, Marlborough and Napoleon. To each of these figures Washington compares favorably. This is not because of his genius, which is in fact no match for theirs, but because every one of his counterparts is blemished by a fatal moral weakness: for Alexander, it is self-indulgence and intemperance; for Caesar and Cromwell, a willingness to compromise the

liberties of their countrymen; for Peter the Great, fiendishness and criminality; for Frederick the Great, ostentation and perversion; for Marlborough, shameless fraudulence; for Napoleon, a thirst for domestic dictatorship and foreign conquest. These men and their assembled exploits embody the established formula for heroism "to which the aspiring son of pride has waded" (West, 1800:12-13). Among such men "greatness and guilt have too often been allied," says the Reverend (and former Connecticut legislator) Thomas Baldwin (1800:23). In distinct contrast, Washington's achievements were "not erected upon the agonies of the human heart" (Bancroft, 1800:16). He could "lead without dazzling mankind" (Ames, 1800:3), and so achieve a fame that is "whiter than it is brilliant" (Baldwin, 1800:23).

This conclusion, along with the reasoning which supports it, represents the most conspicuous and elaborate theme—and the most common denominator—of the eulogies delivered during the months following Washington's death. For every succeeding generation this message has been repeated and amplified (Schwartz, 1982).

CONCLUSION

Grounded in a different set of social circumstances, the perception of Washington at the time of his death was not something that could be read from the way he was perceived during the early part of his career. The instant veneration that Washington enjoyed upon his military appointment was generated in a context of great emotional fervor. Since the excited expressions of praise for Washington preceded any concrete achievements on his part, it is fair to assume that any man filling the role of commander-in-chief would have been as much esteemed as he was. In this sense, the initial phase of Washington's career as a national symbol was "role-based" and the result of "affective induction." In contrast, the postwar praise of Washington invariably made references to what he did and did not do as commanding general, and those aspects of his performance expressly singled out for acclaim had, as we have seen, a distinct affinity for the tenets of the Anglo-American whig tradition. The tradition itself played a different part in society's reaction to Washington in the early and later phases of his career. While the ideals of whiggery had nothing directly to do with his abrupt deification in 1775, these ideals did generate assumptions about Washington's "disinterested" motives, his respect for the role of citizen-soldier, the minimal contribution of genius to his military greatness, and so forth.

Only at war's end were these assumptions verified by actual performance, and, in the context of public preoccupation over the redistribution of institutional power, it was this verification which transformed Washington into an absolutely credible symbol of the nation's political morality. In this sense, the second phase of Washington's veneration was "performance-based" and the result of "moral induction."

In both phases of Washington's career, the correspondence between his veneration and the concerns of his countrymen is mediated by a kind of "venerational reason," a form of encoding based on metaphoric appreciation. Commitment to a political culture thus shows up in the form of devotion to a man. To see Washington in this way is to see him as a "collective representation," a visible *symbol* of the values and tendencies of his society rather than a *source* of these values and tendencies. Representing the conservative tone first emitted by Durkheim,¹¹ this formulation cannot be applied to the more innovative types of heroic leadership. Of these types Max Weber speaks with the greatest force and clarity. On the other hand, to see Washington as the symbol of a deeply entrenched whig tradition is important because it permits us to see the charismatic hero from a different point of view. Personified by Washington, the republican ideal does not merely deviate from Weber's conception of charisma; it is its very antithesis. The republican leader and the charismatic leader represent the two polar forms of heroic leadership.

¹¹ The tone is not uniquely Durkheimian. Indeed, the fact that it is heard at all in the United States, says Talcott Parsons (1968:67), is partly due to the intellectual taste which Charles Horton Cooley helped to establish. Documentation of Parsons' claim includes Cooley's ([1902] 1964:317-57) essay on leadership and personal ascendancy. Here Cooley prefigures Durkheim when he points out that the intangible values associated with a society become most vividly manifest in the people who embody them. Deep feeling about a nation, he says, "almost invariably connects itself with a personal image. . . . The function of the great and famous man, [therefore], is to be a symbol." While the lines of analysis followed by Durkheim and Cooley are by no means identical, a common focus is given in their emphasis on the cultural and institutional setting in which the leader operates. In contrast to Weber, who sees great men and radical change as inseparable, the more general approach that has developed from Durkheim's and Cooley's work alerts us to the way social definitions of great men express the continuities, as well as the discontinuities, of history. Many students of heroic leadership have been influenced by this approach (Czarnowski, [1919] 1975; Case, 1933; Mecklin, 1941; Turner and Killian, 1957; Klapp, 1948, 1962, 1964; Cohen, 1979; Turner, 1974).

While the great charismatic leader exudes confidence in his extraordinary abilities, thrives on power and glorification and, lacking ties to the established social order, seeks to effect its radical change, the great republican leader, as exemplified by Washington, affirms the traditional values and structures of his society by repudiating personal power. Thus if the American Revolution was an essentially conservative uprising—a struggle not to create but to maintain freedoms and rights—then the image of Washington may be its perfect symbolic expression. The respects in which this expression opposes Weber's image of heroic leadership are summarized in Table 1.

Stressing change over tradition, assigning priority of action over structure, and focusing on the possibility of sudden social transformation by extraordinary men, the elements in the left-hand column of this table celebrate the decisive deed and the historical significance of a leading figure's initiative. By contrast, the traits listed in the right-hand column of Table 1 reflect a political ideology more respectful of institutional restraints and procedures, one which conceives of power not as a prize to be seized from the community but as an obligation imposed by it. Accordingly, whoever personifies this ideology must be the model public servant who overcomes the authoritarian potential inherent in his own glorification; he must distinguish himself from the Caesaristic leader who exploits mass support for the purpose of establishing charismatic dictatorship.

According to the German scholar Johannes Kuhn (1932:142), "It is not easy for Europeans to comprehend the significance of a man like Washington. We are too accustomed to seek human greatness in unusual talents and gifts of an individual nature." Drawing from this same intellectual tradition, a tradition which informed the leadership theories of Nietzsche, Freud, and Michels (Bell, 1965), Weber could find in the leader's "specific gifts of the body and mind" the basis of his followers' "duty" to submit to his commands (1968b:1112). Against this conception, with its emphasis on entitlement, privilege, and strength, the ideal of heroic leadership that took root in eighteenth-century America stressed the republican virtues of obligation, sacrifice, and disinterestedness. This ideal is important not only for its practical political significance but also because it embodies a solution to one of political philosophy's most enduring dilemmas: the reconciliation of democratic structures to the veneration of the individual hero. The great historical significance of Washington is that he gave this ideal its first and most dramatic personification. By worshipping Washington, then, Americans could worship themselves.

Table 1. Washington and the Weberian Hero

<i>The Charismatic Leader</i>	<i>Washington</i>
Leader is self-appointed. He is "called" to a social mission and exudes self-confidence in his ability to carry it out.	Believes in mission but expresses no confidence in his ability to lead it. Seeks to avoid the leadership role to which he is appointed by others.
Leader is unattached to established social institutions and plays no part in their activities.	Washington is a member of the elite establishment, an incumbent representative and protector of the central institutions of his society.
Leader is a radical who seeks to destroy existing traditions.	Washington is a conservative who is totally committed to existing traditions.
Leader achieves and maintains authority by putting extraordinary talents to use in the performance of miraculous feats and/or the formulation of a new ideology.	Washington's talents are not extraordinary. He performs no unusual military or political feats and propounds nothing new in the way of ideology.
Leader rejects rational administrative conduct. He dispenses power and justice in a "particularistic" manner, consistent with his personal interests and missions.	Washington is an incumbent in military and political bureaucracies. Administers power and justice according to impersonal "universalistic" standards.
Leader takes no part in institution building. His ideals and authority are routinized by disciples and successors.	Washington plays a direct role in both the creation and administration of new institutional structures.
Leader derives his prestige by the seizing and effective use of power, thus demonstrating "strength in life."	Washington derives his prestige by the avoidance and relinquishment of power, thus demonstrating "virtue."

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