

different spheres of the groups he's headed."

Since Bennis made that assertion only a few months back, Williams has added yet another post—as counsel to super-lawyers Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom. This position brings him full circle, in a sense, because his wide-ranging work life began with practicing law at what was then called Hunt Foods, where he later ascended to chairmanship. He chucked it in 1970 to become dean of UCLA's Graduate School of Management, crossed the continent in 1977 to head the Securities and Exchange Commission, and then, beginning in 1981, spent 17 years as president of the J. Paul Getty Trust—spectacularly capping his tenure with last year's opening of the Getty Center. He remains linked with the trust as president emeritus.

What possesses an executive—or, more accurately, what does he possess—to repeatedly depart the relatively safe haven of one organization and risk a roll of the dice with another far removed? "I never went into anything that didn't turn me on," says Williams. "Nor did I take any new job without at least a hypothesis on how it might be done better. When I went from Norton Simon to UCLA, I had ideas for turning the school around in certain ways, because I had hired many MBAs and seen blind spots in their worldview.

"This isn't to say I came in and announced, 'Here's what I am going to do.' I knew I couldn't do anything alone. But I had learned by talking to faculty members before I took the job that many of them agreed with some of the changes I thought might be needed."

In all of his varied posts, Williams says, "I saw myself in essentially the same way. I am a manager of people. They know their subject matter better than I. They have their own vision. And they have what I call the 'big motors' that drive them toward that vision. I realized, early on, that good leadership means giving such people plenty of room. That made trust the most important attribute required of me in any of those jobs. Trust that they'll do what's right and best, and that they'll be straight with me."

Williams also points to possessing "a good bit of self-confidence," which allows him "to learn from the people I manage." There is within him, too, "a fair degree of humility—enough to give people the room they need to make me look good."

Despite the solid groundwork of research and consultations he lays down before accepting any new post, Williams acknowledges that, "It was impossible to remove all the risk of making a change. And I wouldn't want to. If there were no risk, why would anyone want to make a change?" ■

Leadership vs. Authority

Distinguishing between the two
is critical to understanding
our lives and institutions.

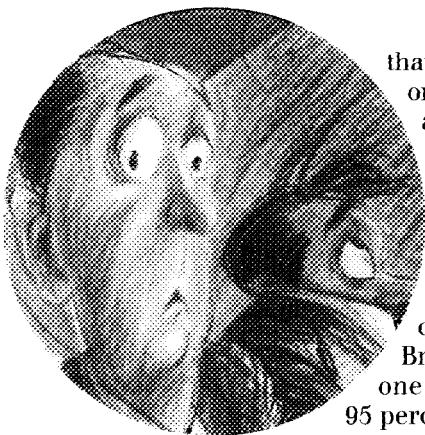
By Ronald A. Heifetz

In our common language, we almost always equate leadership with authority, but leadership is not the same as authority. Journalists talk about the leadership of the gang, the leadership of the country, the leadership of the House or the Senate, the leadership of the corporation. In all of these cases, we are really talking about people in top positions of authority. Intuitively, we know that leadership is not the same as authority; yet in the very next breath, we complain about the lack of leadership we get from these same people.

Why isn't leadership the same as authority? In many cases, if leadership is simply defined as moving the ball forward or getting the problem solved, they could be one and the same. As long as we are operating in a stable ecosystem where the authority figure—say, the silverback gorilla—really does know, in gorilla terms, where the berries are to be found and can beat on his chest and say, "Off we go," and have the band follow in single file to get there, then authoritative know-how can pass for leadership. The silverback is older and more experienced, and he has a particular expertise that derives from his experience, giving him the necessary know-how.

We need to distinguish leadership from authority so that we can begin to understand that we need leadership not simply from people in top positions of authority but also from people *without* authority—from a saleswoman, for instance, who notices within her local environment, 10,000 miles from headquarters, that something is changing, that the customer is no longer happy. Leadership without authority requires that saleswoman to find a way to mobilize her customer to confront a reality that he may not want to face. How can she do

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that without getting herself killed off or marginalized as a whistleblower, a troublemaker, or a hysteric?

It is possible to lead without authority. For example, a few years ago, in doing her doctoral research on American Indian poverty and alcoholism, my wife was interviewing various American Indian tribes in Montana and British Columbia. She came across one community that had gone from 95 percent alcoholism to 95 percent sobriety. That means that everybody over the age of 14 used to drink and now they do not. She talked to a woman who was instrumental in making this happen, and asked her, "Where did you get the idea that this would be possible? You have grown up in a community where alcohol is almost part of the culture."

She answered: "About 15 years ago, I used to babysit up the road for Lois. After a few months of babysitting for her, I got curious as to what she could be doing every Tuesday night. So one night I packed up the kids and followed her to the meeting lodge. I looked through the window and saw her sitting in a large circle of chairs all by herself. When Lois came home, I asked her what she was doing. She said that she was holding an AA meeting at the lodge. I said, 'You were sitting there all alone!' Lois replied, 'I wasn't alone. I was there with the spirits and the ancestors. One day, our people will come.' Lois held this meeting every week, and it was a year before anybody showed up. It was two years before there were more than five people there. In 10 years, that room was filled."

Our language no longer serves us. The logical construct in the terms *leadership* and *followership* is bankrupt. You can lead without followers. In fact, the best leadership does not generate followers—it generates other leaders. It generates people who are willing to take responsibility. When Martin Luther King Jr. mobilized people in black communities in the South to stand up for themselves, they did not look at themselves as followers. They were stimulated into taking responsibility, into taking action. The word *follower* does not serve us in that way. It is an archetype that goes back to the imagery of the silverback gorilla: the authority, who knows the way, leads, while the rest of the band follows behind, expecting to be led to the berries.

I want to say a few words about staying alive, since leading people to tackle tough challenges, without easy answers, is often dangerous. It is critically important to distinguish your role from yourself. After many decades in a business or professional life, we actually begin to think we *are* that role. But

there is no role big enough for expressing and conveying all of who we are as human beings. The role of CEO is a vehicle for expressing some of who you are. The role of parent is a vehicle for expressing another dimension of who you are. The role of volunteer, of friend, of citizen—each social role is a vehicle for expressing a different aspect of yourself, and none is sufficient on its own.

When we begin to equate ourselves only with our professional role, not only do we rob ourselves of something much more essential in terms of our worth, but we set ourselves up to make a classic diagnostic error. We take personally what is not personal. Even the most effective attacks that come at us—those that are personalized—are rarely personal. When we take them personally, we make a fundamental error, and then we respond incorrectly.

The best example of this comes from parenting. A friend of mine said, "You'll know you've really made it as a parent when your child slams the door in your face or says, 'I hate you, Daddy,' and you don't take it personally." We all know what it is like when we are at our worst, but when we are at our best, we say to the child, "You don't behave that way," and we set limits in whatever way we think is necessary. And then we maintain a diagnostic mindset. We stay diagnostic, and we keep probing and trying to figure out what is really going on with that child. What is really upsetting him and generating this attack, this pressure, this expectation? Sometimes we ask and the child says, "I'm fine. The problem is you." But sometimes, late at night, because you've maintained a diagnostic mindset, you begin to hear the real story.

We all have the normal human need to be important. Everybody wants to matter to somebody. Yet some of us want so much to be needed, to feel important, that we go to lengths to develop enormous expertise so that we can solve other people's problems. But sometimes the need to be needed gets out of hand. Take someone who has worked really hard to have expertise and know-how, then plug him into an organizational circuit that is desperate for someone who knows the way, who has the vision. He is so smart that he pulls a rabbit out of the hat. Everybody in the organization deems himself blessed. Then he pulls a rabbit out of the hat the second time. By the third time, nobody is thinking critically any more. The state of dependency becomes profound.

Now you have the blind leading the blind, because the person who is invested in his own self-importance becomes grandiose, and he cannot tell the difference between what he knows and does not know. Then he becomes dangerous. We have seen that a lot both in societies and in businesses. ■