Series editor's preface

Resentment is an ugly emotion. When infected by it, societies and individuals often behave badly. The English word 'resentment' describes a feeling. Its French counterpart, '*ressentiment*,' comprises not just the feeling of resentment, but also the complex web of beliefs that foster it, and the impact of this feeling on individuals, groups, and societies. In this unique and important contribution to leadership studies, Ruth Capriles takes us on a sophisticated philosophic journey into the pathology of *ressentiment* and the ways in which leaders infect their followers with it to achieve their goals. Capriles calls *ressentiment* a morally harmful 'political passion'. Rather than empowering people, she says, it plays on their sense of impotence, corrodes their souls, erodes their institutions, and distorts social relationships and values.

In this book, Capriles details the nature of this emotion and 'social disease' and then shows us what it looks like in practice through a number of examples and her case study of the Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Here she describes how Chavez systematically cultivated *ressentiment* and used it to grow a base of compliant followers who feel strong because they nurse a smoldering rage over a real or invented insult, grudge, injustice, or claim against others. Such followers are capable of abandoning human decency because of their misplaced belief that it is necessary to even the score. Capriles' examples demonstrate how *ressentiment* allows terrorists to justify killing children and citizens to rationalize attacking their neighbors. This book offers insights into the emotions and ideas behind a variety of leaders and followers – from the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street movements in the US to the anti-immigration parties in Europe.

The field of leadership studies consists of an extensive body of empirical research on charismatic leaders and studies of the mechanisms behind transformational leader/follower relationships, such as individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and inspirational motivation. There are also books and articles on bad or 'toxic' leaders. Yet none of this literature adequately captures the moral and psychological phenomenon of Capriles' research. Leadership scholars might understand a leader like Hugo Chavez in terms of charisma, and perhaps transactional

or pseudo-transformational leadership, however they do not explain the complicated feelings and ideas that he worked to evoke in his followers.

There are many ways in which this book makes a valuable contribution to the leadership literature. First, by analyzing the complex philosophic ideas and implications of *ressentiment*, it unpacks the kinds of variables that social scientists might use to study how leaders use *ressentiment* and the social impact of *ressentiment* on individuals, organizations, and societies. Second, the study of *ressentiment* offers profound insights into leadership in the world around us. It provides a better understanding of terrorist groups and also the political behavior of leaders and followers in some democratic and dictatorial societies. Lastly, Capriles contributes to a small but emerging body of philosophic literature on leadership that promises to enrich the field with a fuller understanding of the ideas and values that motivate both leaders and followers to behave the way that they do.

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