



Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits

By Jeffrie G. Murphy

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In this short and accessible book, distinguished philosopher and law professor Jeffrie Murphy proposes that vindictive emotions (anger, resentment, and the desire for revenge) actually deserve a more legitimate place in our emotional, social, and legal lives than we currently recognize, while forgiveness deserves to be more selectively granted. Murphy grounds his views on careful analysis of the nature of forgiveness, a subtle understanding of the psychology of anger and resentment, and a fine appreciation of the ethical issues of self-respect and self-defense. He also uses accessible examples from law, literature, and religion to make his points. Providing a nuanced approach to a proper understanding of the place of our strongest emotions in moral, political, and personal life, and using lucid, easily understood prose, this volume is a classic example of philosophical thinking applied to a thorny, everyday problem.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Getting Even is probably the best book to date on the costs and benefits of forgiveness."--First Things

"Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits is a well-written and accessible yet deeply serious examination of the costs of forgiveness and the dangers of cheap grace."--First Things

"Jeffrie Murphy has written a wonderful and sensitive book on an almost forbidden topic, the topic of revenge. But it is also a book about forgiveness, and it is striking a judicious balance between these two that makes Murphy's book such a challenge and a success. Unlike the herd of authors writing on forgiveness, he suggests difficult objections and deep reasons for reservation. But neither does his book display real enthusiasm for revenge, although he gives it a good run and 'two cheers.' If the book ends up with a rather Christian account of forgiveness that will please many readers, Murphy takes them through some psychologically difficult but philosophically clear and very readable terrain to get there."--Robert C. Solomon, Quincy Lee Centennial Professor and Distinguished Teaching Professor, The University of Texas at Austin

"In a voice that is reasonable, incisively witty, finely tuned to human emotion, and wise, Murphy teaches us how to think about our most difficult moral dilemmas. When should we forgive? When might it be healthy to hold a grudge? We would all do well to think through these questions from both a personal and moral perspective with this thoughtful and fascinating meditation."--Sharon Lamb, Professor of Psychology, St. Michael's College, author of *The Secret Lives of Girls* and *The Trouble with Blame*

"Jeffrie Murphy has been a distinctive voice in the discussion of how we should respond to wrongdoing (our own and others'): a humane, philosophically astute, morally sensitive and imaginative voice that reminds us of the merits as well as the dangers of such often deprecated responses as anger, resentment and a desire to 'get even', and that brings out the difficulty as well as the significance of such responses as forgiveness, mercy and repentance. Anyone who cares about how we should respond, whether morally or legally, to the wrongs and evils that we do to each other--that is to say, anyone who aspires to be either a moral agent or a citizen--will find stimulation and sustenance in this book."--R.A. Duff, University of Stirling, Scotland

About the Author

Jeffrie G. Murphy is Regents Professor of Law and Philosophy and Affiliated Professor of Religious Studies at Arizona State University. He is the author of numerous books and articles on legal and moral philosophy, with a particular emphasis on theories of punishment, mercy, forgiveness, and the moral emotions.

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