Australia’s cricketers, pondering another three years without the coveted Ashes after their failure to beat England in the current series, might yearn for a player like Hugh Trumble, ancestor of Angus Trumble, whose book The Finger is reviewed by Ferdinand Mount. Trumble’s “uncommonly long fingers” helped him to spin the ball prodigiously, an Antipodean art now apparently fallen into desuetude.

D H
A sorry business

CHARLES L. GRISWOLD

THOMAS BRUDHOLM

RESENTMENT'S VIRTUE
Jean Améry and the refusal to forgive
239pp. Temple University Press. $32.50 (US $51.50).
978-1-59213-566-0

Nick Smith

I WAS WRONG
The meanings of apologies
298pp. Cambridge University Press. £47.
978-0-521-68423-1

Linda Radzik

MAKING AMENDS
Atonement in morality, law, and politics
978-0-19-537366-0

The Toyota Motor Corp President Akio Toyoda at a news conference in Nagoya, Japan, February 5, 2010, after a global recall of Toyota cars

Of the meanings Smith isolates are necessary conditions. His philosophical methodology, then, is debatable. It is at its most fruitful when collective apologies. His discussion of the perplexing problems of assigning intentions and responsibility to collectives is excellent, as is his measured defence of the possibility of doing so. Smith also offers the provocative suggestion of whether and apology (is it true that women apologize more than men?) and of non-standard cases such as apologizing to the dead, to animals and to oneself.

Of course we will expect more than apology from a wrongdoer. Linda Radzik’s fine book Making Amends: Atonement in morality, law, and politics offers a carefully argued and innovative theory to explain the effect that what is needed from offenders is atonement. Her “etic of atonement” is built around a notion fraught with religious connotations, but is a secular philosophical theory. She is keenly aware of the potential for manipulation in demanding atonement; noting that “the history of atonement is in large part a history of degradation”. As an example that serves as a cautionary but powerful reminder of the history of the Magdalen asylums of Ireland. The exploitation of women – justified by demands for atonement – by these Catholic “asylums” has yet to be reckoned with.

Starting from her thesis that wrongs damage relationships, Radzik expertly and critically examines theories of atonement as moral transformation and as debt repayment (the repayment may be understood in terms of restitution, or in retributivist terms – sometimes teleologically articulated – which treat suffering as the medium of exchange). She rightly finds them incomplete or problematic. They minimize the moral significance either of the victim (transferring yourself doesn’t necessarily help your victim) or of the offender (restitution can be made by a third party). Instead she offers a model of reconciliation that reflects “the social nature of wrongdoing”. Indeed, “proper atonement” requires reciprocity from the victim, such as bilateral “respectful communication”. Steps to be taken by the wrongdoer normally include apology, moral self-improvement, empathy with the victim, and reparations. When the offender atones, “the victim will have good reason to give up her resentment, fear, and distrust of the wrongdoer” and to forgive.

While it sounds as though Radzik is working out the conditions that warrant forgiveness, she also maintains that the victim may justifiably need to hold on to her resentment out of self-respect and a sense of justice. So one could be held and be reconciled without being forgiven. I do not find that argument persuasive: an offender who has atoned in Radzik’s sense should be forgiven, over time, by a self-respecting victim who values what is just, and Radzik herself seems to waver when writing the “the final correction of wrongdoing seems to depend on the victim’s... willingness to forgive or morally reconcile with an offender who has made a sincere and pro-political repentance as makes a very strong case for her reconciliation theory, including its political and legal applications. Her discussions of “restorative justice” and of the problem of collective atonement are superb, and dovetail nicely with Smith’s analysis of apology and with Brudholm’s discussion of “resentment’s virtue”.

The page contains a philosophical discussion on the nature of apologies and their role in forgiveness. It highlights the work of authors such as Charles L. Griswold, Thomas Brudholm, Nick Smith, and Linda Radzik, whose books explore various aspects of apology and atonement. The image mentions a news conference of the President of Toyota, Akio Toyoda, following a global recall of Toyota cars, suggesting a connection to themes of corporate responsibility and moral accountability.

The text discusses the complexities of apologies, their role in healing relationships, and the ethical considerations involved. It touches on the distinction between forgiveness and atonement, and the different philosophical approaches to these concepts. The authors analyze the historical and cultural contexts of apologies and atonement, and their implications in modern societies. The discussion includes the role of apologies in legal and moral contexts, and the broader implications for justice and ethical behavior.