The Profound Apology

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February 21, 2017
https://www.kluwermediationblog.net/2017/02/21/the-profound-apology/

An apology can be given an extra level through a general acknowledgement at the end of the spectrum to a profound apology of the other end.

The profound apology requires a number of essential ingredients. The first, and most important, is preparation. For both the person giving the apology and the one receiving it, time is needed to prepare physically and mentally for the meeting. This is best done with the assistance of a skilled professional mediator to facilitate the process.

The first step in the preparation is an assessment by the mediator as to whether such a meeting will breach the mediator’s implied duty to do so. This is so because a mediator is particularly required if the person wanting to give the apology is the same person who has caused the original harm. There is a real danger that the original harm can be compounded by the process. This applies particularly to cases of sexual and extreme physical abuse. Those cases are excluded from the apology process which is instead given by the institutions within which those abuses occurred.

This assessment is carried out through pre-facilitation meetings with both the giver of the apology and the receiver. The aim is to assess not only the emotional readiness of both to engage with each other but more importantly whether they both have the capacity to relate to each other on a personal level. It is the ability of the two people to connect personally with each other that is at the heart of the profound apology. Without this connection the depth of the apology is greatly lessened.

The key to achieving this connection comes through the conduit of the mediator. The mediator must find a personal connection with each of the giver and the receiver. This is done through an informal conversation with each of them separately starting with the question “how do you feel about meeting other people in a few weeks time?” The mediator will then explore in conversation how the parties are feeling at this moment in time. This enables the mediator to build a personal relationship with each party.

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