**Supplementary Document no. 1 for Chapter 7.**

**Coming To Terms With History: “Apology” Versus “Acknowledgment”.**

**What Is The Difference?**

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Thank you. Let me introduce myself. I’m Robert Miller. I was originally British but arrived in New Zealand in 1977. Before that, I had major psychiatric problems. I certainly know, at first hand, what florid psychosis is, and for what it’s worth, have the diagnosis of schizophrenia on my head. In New Zealand, I was an academic for 23 years, and since the year 2000, have been what I call a free-lance researcher. I’ve had a good deal to do with public education about mental disorders and have been a community representative on college committees for the past five years. I want to be as concise as possible here, to allow time for discussion of the points I raise.

You will, I hope, have read my abstract. There are two important matters in the background to my presentation. First, in New Zealand, in the aftermath of a Royal Commission into mental health services in the early 1990s, it became increasingly clear that, in the asylums, in the not-too-distant past, there had been serious abuses, and in some asylums, one could say a culture of abuse. Between the years 2005 and 2007 a process was set up – a Confidential Forum - in which former patients in those asylums, who felt they had been victims of abuse could talk in confidence to a small panel, to tell of their experiences. To some extent this process was modelled on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in post-Apartheid South Africa, although, being confidential, it was obviously different from that process. In due course a report of those hearings was published, based on testimony of over 500 persons, mainly ex-patients, but some witnesses were family members, some were staff at those institutions. While, it is the New Zealand government that primarily carries the can for those events, the psychiatric profession also has some historic responsibility, since in most cases it would have been a psychiatrist’s signature which led to people being put away in those institutions; and, since psychiatrists were remarkable by their *absence* from those institutions, they, by their apparently turning a blind eye to what was going on, also bear some responsibility. Many of those who told their stories were helped by the process, some are still angry, and some have been calling for an official apology from the New Zealand Government. That has not been forthcoming so far. Indeed, there has not yet been proper acknowledgement by government of what had occurred in those state-run institutions.

Now that was how I had planned to begin this presentation. Having written the whole thing, I sent it off to my trusted friend in Wellington, who had been one of the facilitators on that Confidential Forum – a very remarkable lady, who also saw as an inmate the very worst that the asylums in New Zealand had to offer, and usually conveys her very serious concerns in a quite restrained way. Last Monday I heard back from her. As a result, I have revised my presentation. I am not going to offer any opinion on the ‘apology’ versus ‘acknowledgment’ issue. Instead, I am going to present to you what she sent to me:’ Here is the gist of it:-

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As to the acknowledgment V Apology question....I cannot concur with you , as I watched innocence brutally having it’s young bones smashed and broken and skeletal youth collapse ,left in the corner, stinking in its urine and smearing linoleum with blood.

Helen Clarke said in her apology to the Youth of Lake Alice,

*“There were things that could never be accepted as practices of that day and for that we apologise. (Not the exact words the folder is not with me at present)”*

Robert, what I heard was the testimony of peoples long held secrets of such horror , while there is no magnitude to suffering , suffering IS suffering. It was their truth to be laid at the feet (at the table of the three listeners) and for that people deserve to be yes **ACKNOWLEDGED** √, and with that comes the **apology.**

Apology is through **acknowledgment** it is not a simple dichotomy,

like the old nature v.  nurture debate long since abandoned to become nature via nurture to become formed into being-ness.

Binary thinking will not answer how I see things here.

Acknowledgement forms the basis upon which a movement of the compassionate heart will give voice to an apology.

I finish with my most of all loved verses.

***History says, ”Don’t hope of this side of the grave.!”***

***But once in a life time***

***The longed for tidal wave of justice can rise up***

***And hope and history rhyme.***

***So hope for a great sea change on the far side of revenge***

***Believe that a further shore is reachable from here.***

***Believe in miracles and cures and healing wells.***

***Seamus Heaney ....The Cure at Troy”***

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In the letter I wrote back to say that she had been much closer to the ‘coal face’ than ever I had, and for much longer; and that I want to know what she knew, although she cannot tell me much of the detail. . . .And as I said just now, I am not going to offer any opinion here today.

I do however, want to ask you, as members of RANZCP (most or all of you that is), three questions:

1. *Do you have any idea what she was writing about?*
2. *What is your view on her challenging words? Is it right that both a full acknowledgement and a fulsome apology come from this college, as one of the players in what happened?*
3. *What message can I take back to her, from you, to preserve your integrity, my integrity, and that of an important friendship?*

Now while you are thinking about that I have one more point to make, before I finish. I have sat on college committees as a community representative for the past five years – a very enriching experience for me, I should say – but I have now resigned from those positions; and so, for the foreseeable future, this is the last time that I will be at college congress. My reasons for resigning have been outlined in a document which has been sent to the committees on which I have sat, and has been considered, I think, by the college’s Board of Directors. As a brief summary, I see a major inconsistency in the college’s policy which I can no longer live with. The policy going under the title “involving the community” appears to be central to the way this college wants to develop, but I have no confidence in the way the policy is being implemented. Community involvement – and the recruiting of community representatives such as myself on to college committees appears to be aimed to help the college implement its own agendas, perhaps to make them look good in the public eye; but anything brought to the table from the people I think I am representing seems to move very slowly or not at all. This is not good enough. If that policy is to become a reality there needs to be some substantial shift in the balance of power between this college and the communities it claims to be serving. By resigning, I am hoping that I can exert greater leverage from outside than I can from inside. If *you* also want major change, I would be happy to work with you, and would be happy to hear from you. That is up to you. Apart from that, for anyone who wants an e-mailed copy of my resignation document – there is a clip-board being circulated, on which you can give your name and e-mail address; and when I get back to New Zealand, I will happily send you copies of that document. Thank you. Now I would be happy to hear your comments on those three questions: