

of our attention and care—as we are of theirs. Communication philosopher Michael Hyde poses a most interesting question, “What would life be like if no one acknowledged your existence?” You can imagine the isolation, fear, and anger that might mount under such conditions. Indeed, acknowledgment creates the space for others to enter our lives, and in doing so welcomes others to continue the conversation we start. As such, acknowledgment is an ethical move that oftentimes begins with a simple but earnest, “How are you?” or “Here I am!” in response to another’s call.

Acknowledgment is powerful. When it is offered in positive ways, a more caring relationship between people develops. When it is offered with negative intent in some forms as sarcasm, insults, or disrespect, it has the effect of making people feel bad, unloved, and unworthy. Because we have a choice to make as we encounter friends and strangers, acknowledgment is a way to communicate our ethical posture.

#### FROM MONOLOGUE TO DIALOGUE

Speech is ethical when it appreciates the value of another, is spoken in a way to create new meaning, and is genuine in its expression. This special form of speech is what philosophers and communication experts refer to as *dialogue*. Following the ideas offered by Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas, as well as the concepts taken from philosophers Mikhail Bakhtin and Hans Georg Gadamer, the theme of dialogue has over time achieved a mark of distinction in the study of communication. This is because dialogue engages another fully with a spirit of support, as contrasted to argument, which tends to encourage competitive behavior with the goal of beating the other in a reasoning game. Dialogue invites a sense of community by speaking to the other person where he or she is, as distinguished from monologue, which tends to create distance among people who are primarily concerned with their own individual agendas. Dialogue targets honest, heart-felt communication with another, with unconditional regard for his or her well-being.

Have you ever been in a classroom, for instance, when someone started talking about a difficult subject from a very personal perspective in an attempt to educate and inform others? When this happens, dialogue can follow.

Euthanasia, for instance, is a topic on which many people have a predetermined position either for or against. In a classroom discussion years ago, a student revealed that her family chose “passive euthanasia” for a loved one by not administering any more

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