



EMPATHY IN COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

An approach to caring for people with
dementia

Eight ways of imagining empathy

1. Knowing another person's internal states, including her thoughts and feelings
2. Adopting the posture or matching the neural states of an observed other
3. Coming to feel as another person feels
4. Intuiting or projecting oneself into another's situation

Eight ways of imagining empathy

5. Imagining how another is thinking or feeling
6. Imagining how one would think and feel in another's place
7. Feeling distress when witnessing another person's suffering
8. Feeling for another person who is suffering

Decety, J., Ikes, W. (Eds.). (2011). *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

What is communicative action?

Term coined by Habermas

Communicative action is communication seeking mutual agreement for the purpose of coordinating action.

“It is constitutive for communicative action that participants carry out their plans cooperatively in an action situation defined in common.”

--Habermas (1985)

What is communicative action?

- The action of communicative action is the action we take interpersonally to come to a mutual understanding of *our* situation.
- Where we are is “in” a situation.
- Who is authorized to define the situation we are in?
- No one or no thing (system) but us.
- In the act of seeking a mutual understanding of our situation, and thus *how* we will be together, *who* we are is disclosed to us.

What is communicative action?

“In communicative action, people step out of their strategic, and ego-centric rationality, their formal role and identity. They open up to others as people with a name and a face with a view to engaging in processes towards reaching mutual understanding.”

--V.E. Baur:

What is communicative action?

We ~~find~~ create (and continually recreate) ourselves in communicative action.

Communicative action is the playing human that makes us so.





What is not communicative action?

Instrumental action

What is instrumental action?

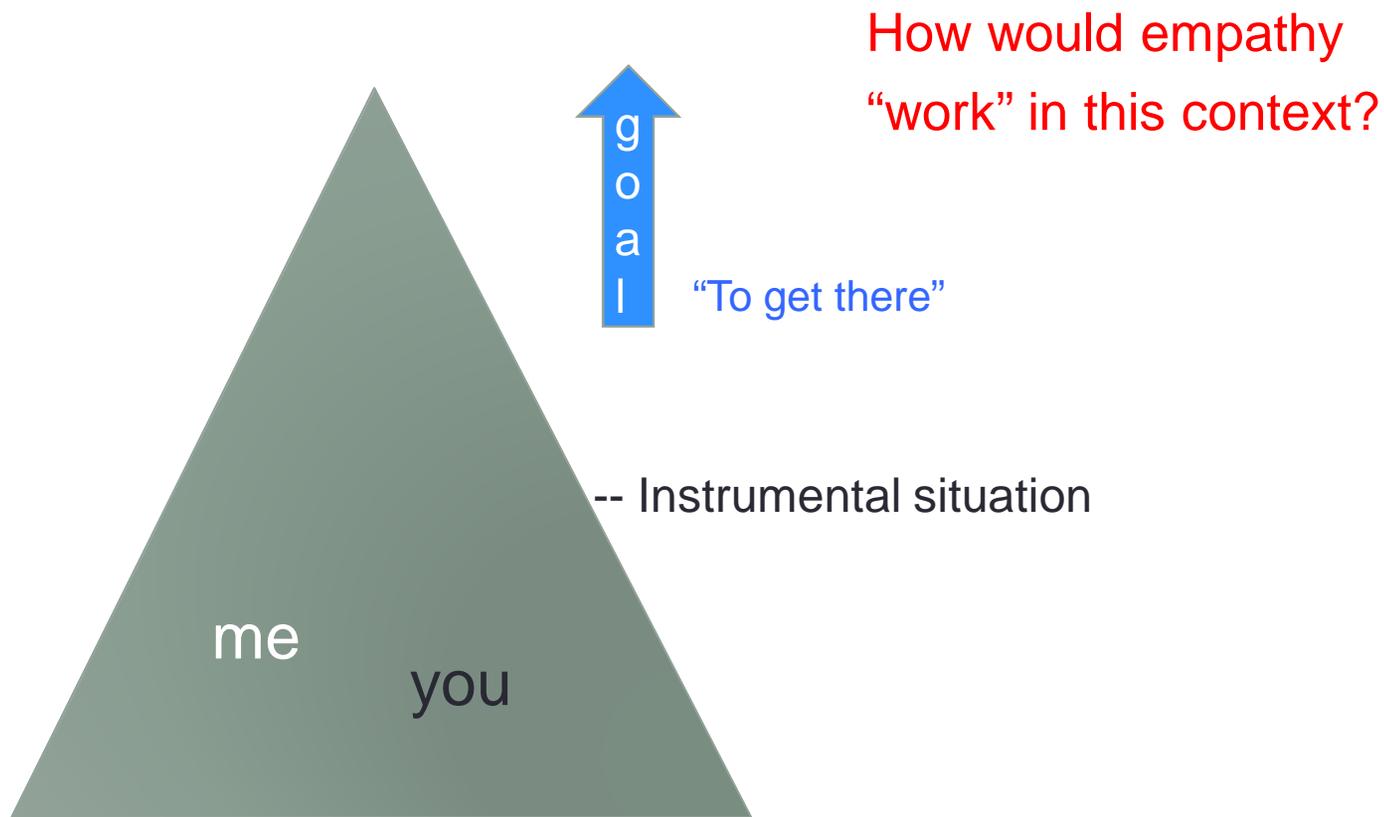
Instrumental action (also known as goal-instrumental action, *zweckrational*) is a social action pursued after evaluating its consequences and consideration of the various means to achieve it.

- When employing this type of action, a person views the other as if he/she were an object or organizational resource (rather than another actor) and attempts to manipulate him/her to act according to his wishes.

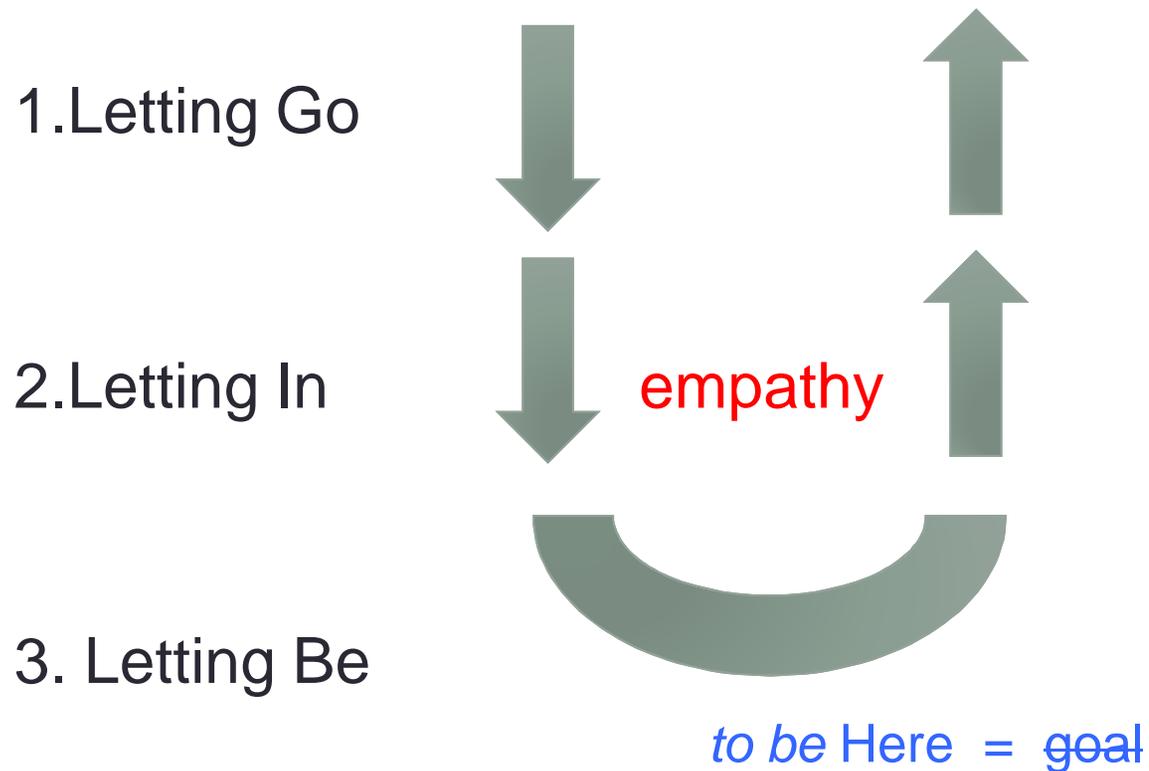
(MIS Quarterly 1997, p. 154)

- Often we are ourselves are the instruments, however unknowingly, of instrumental action. Our actions are serving a system whose rationality is instrumental.

Empathy in instrumental action?



Empathy in communicative action





“Caring” as doing verb

Doing *to*

Doing *for*

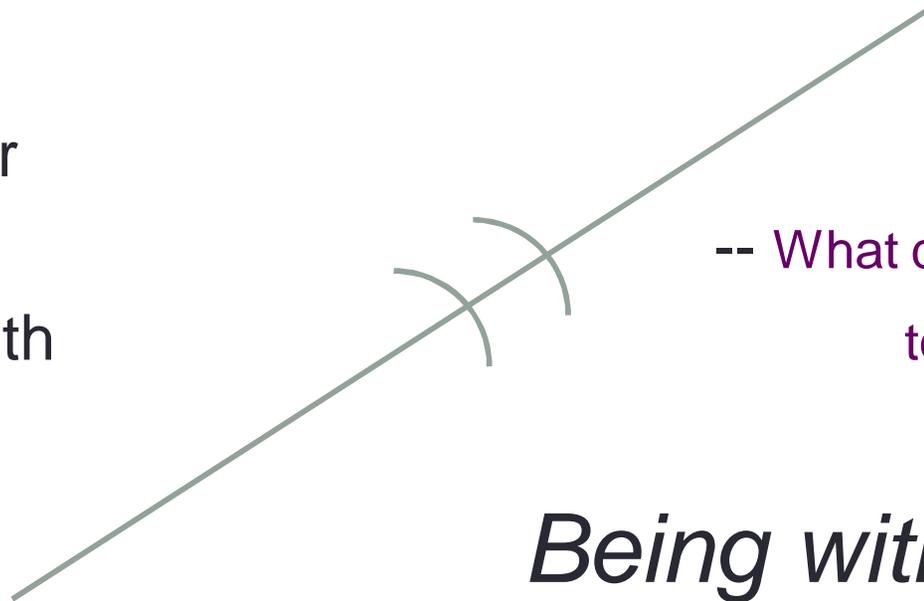
Doing *with*

Caring as a “being (together)” verb

Doing to

Doing for

Doing with



-- What does it take
to cross this bridge?

Being with

Being With Another

Two people are being with one another when they relate to each other with mutual awareness of their mutual willingness to be *open* to one another (Darwell, 2011).

To “be open” to another means, according to Darwell, entering into a relationship with another in which one is

- 1) willing for one’s self to be “breached” by the other
- 2) and is aware that the other is willing to be breached by one’s self

(This idea of a self willing to be “breached” originates with Martin Buber.)



Gladys and Naomi

View clip of Gladys and Naomi

References

Baur, V.E., (2011). Resident Councils Between Lifeworlds and Systems: Is there room for communicative action in Nursing homes? *Journal of Aging Studies*, 25 (4), p. 390-396.

Buber, Martin. (2002). *Between man and man*. London: Routledge Classics.

Darwell, S. (2011) Being With. *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 49, p. 4 – 22.

Decety, J., Ikes, W. (Eds.). (2011). *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Habermas, J. (1985). *The Theory of Communication, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Cambridge, MA: Beacon Press.

Scott, A. (1997). *Modernity's Machine Metaphor*, *The British Journal of Sociology*, (48) 4, p. 561-575.