



*A TAE-Theory  
on  
Living Gladly*

*Stefan Beyer*

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### Introduction

I have applied Gendlin's method of TAE (Thinking At The Edge) in my mother tongue, German, and now would like to present the result in English. For this purpose I will have to translate some German words that only have a rough correspondence in English. This already goes for the name of the topic itself. What I translate as "gladly", is in German "gerne". While gladly is rather rarely used in English, "gerne" is rather pervasive in German. It is used in contexts of politeness, for instance as an answer to "Thank you". In that context it means that what the other thanked for was gladly done or that it was "no problem". It is also often used with expressions of "liking" as when one says "Ich möchte gerne X" – "I would like X". "Möchte" already expresses "to like", so to add "gerne" is in a way superfluous, but it makes the statement softer, more of a proposing something than a wanting or even demanding. If we understand "gerne" as liking, its frequent usage in German rather corresponds to the huge importance of likes and dislikes in our lives. In English the word "like" would fit in that respect – only look at Facebook – but not everything of what I will say fits to calling my theory a theory of "like".

The following attempt to develop a theory of "gladly" or "living gladly" is based on a previous attempt, only this time I am going to follow all of the TAE-steps one by one and more or less (sometimes less) precisely.

What I found earlier is, however, working implicitly in my new attempt. In my earlier attempt I had already arrived at statements like:

The meaning of life is (in a sense) to live gladly.

True health (based on gladly-becoming-healthy) or true learning gladly cannot be made or forced from outside, it somehow has to come from inside.

The gladly, that somehow has to come from inside has, however, to be somehow addressed from outside, only not by means of forcing like repairing, programming or ordering, but for instance by inspiring, inviting, giving permission or expressing gratefulness.

An important point was also that it is in the nature of living gladly to extend: within the body, between human beings and in time. The actual opposite to living gladly is mere standing and enduring life.

Starting from the base of the previous work I will now start anew, following the steps of Gendlin's method.

### **Step 1**

There are several options for beginning a TAE theory construction. The one I chose is a question I found on a DVD of a TAE-workshop by Gendlin in German. It goes roughly like this:

“If you would give your project or topic to another person who is as smart as you, and he or she would carry it out excellently, what would still be lacking?” (Cp. Gendlin, 2000)

When I think of another person who would certainly be able to do it excellently, but only would not have my specific personal background, I think of Gendlin. So I imagine Gendlin would still be alive and pursue my previous results further. What would he not do that only I would do?

As an answer there is indeed a felt sense in regard to my special access to the topic. The first expression or explication of it is to say “If my theory would be a kind of book or booklet, I would give it a specific colored cover!” I doubt that Gendlin would do that.

A cover that would fit for me would be, for instance, a graphics of my own with a yin-yang-symbol in yellow and red with a butterfly in the center. Or the inner cover of the album “Wheels of Fire” by the band Cream, which shows a psychedelic painting by Martin Sharp. By the way, Cream also had a song “I'm So Glad”. (The lyrics do not really fit to my project but perhaps the music improvisation.)

The association of the colored cover is of course only a preliminary hint, something like a “handle“ in Focusing. I have to go on and ask:

“What does the colored cover stand for in the context of my theory construction? “

This brings me back to my initial felt sense and leads to the sentence:  
 “My mother is with me, after having not been with me for a long time.”

It means: What is special if I approach the topic with my own background is that I have an understanding of living gladly for which a key example is that “my mother was with me after not having been with me for a long time”.

The background in my biography is that I was born two months too early and after my birth was in hospital for several weeks separated from my parents. At that time people still thought that premature infants do not experience anything as their nervous system is not developed enough, but people were aware of the danger of germs.

The weeks in the hospital was the time when my mother “was not with me for a long time“. After that time I was brought home to my parents and in general I experienced a very motivated and loving mother, so “she was with me”.

So “My mother is with me, after having not been with me for a long time” is my first example for living gladly.

It is important that the situation before my mother was not with me and the situation afterwards are quite different. Before I was a fetus and my mother was present as a womb so to speak, later I was an infant or baby and my mother came to me and cared for me.

What was before, does not fulfil itself in the same way later, it fulfils itself in a new way. It is a new-fulfilling. The new way was somehow open and unpredictable before, but it is not arbitrary as well.

(There is something auspicious with this: Something that did not occur in the past and now cannot occur any more can yet new-fulfill.)

Step 1 of the TAE-instructions wants me to write the central crux from my felt sense in one short sentence and underline the most important word. I write:

Living gladly cannot be made or forced, it is interactive.

My first instance is the story of my time after birth.

## Step 2

The instruction here is to find what is more than logical in my felt sense and to write an illogical sentence. I can only do this on the basis of my earlier results but it fits to the felt sense of step 1:

Living gladly cannot be made from outside but it cannot come on its own as well.

Respectively:

Something has to come from outside, so that it can come from inside.

## Step 3

In this step I am supposed to find two alternative words for the underlined word in the sentence of step one, which was “interactive”. I find “voluntary” (“*freiwillig*” in German) and “a blossoming”.

When I think about the usual understandings of the three terms I find that the usual definitions don’t fit to what I want to say. I don’t mean “interactive” as communicating alternately with each other, I don’t mean “voluntary” as if you can choose whether you live gladly or not, and I don’t mean “blossoming” as, for instance, a development that follows a standard pattern.

## Step 4

In step 4 I am supposed to write a whole fresh sentence or phrase for each of the words to say what I wanted them to mean, what each word pulls out from my felt sense.

Living gladly cannot be made or forced, it is *interactive*.

There must be a fitting together like with a good mother and her child, and if it fits together it fits for both sides.

Living gladly cannot be made or forced, it is *voluntary* (“*freiwillig*”).

If there is an interaction of two sides, one side has to leave room and trust the other, it must not dominate. It must take the risk that the other side decides against it. If the

other side decides against it, it is a pity for the first one, which is available, but it is a “beautiful, holy” failure.

Living gladly cannot be made or forced, it is *a blossoming*.

It is a new-beginning or energy for a creative new beginning.

### Step 5

In this step I am supposed to expand the previous step by writing fresh, linguistically unusual sentences using the main words or phrases from step 4. I am to underline what is new and important.

Living gladly cannot be made or forced, it is interactive, voluntary, a blossoming.

Something has to develop that mutually fits together, something has to come simultaneously from inside and from outside that fits together. Neither side must dominate, it must leave room. If these conditions are fulfilled, there can happen a new beginning, a new arising, which fulfils in a new way what was before. This new way had not been predictable before.

### Step 6

The instruction for step 6 is to collect facets, especially specific instances. In addition to my key example from step 1 I chose three more facets from my previous work with this theory

*Facet: The intensive care unit*

On TV they show an intensive care unit in a hospital. In bed there lies a victim of an accident in coma, the room around him is totally empty except for a large number of medical devices, with only naked white walls. I am shocked. I hope I will never have to be at such a place as a patient. I cannot imagine that the environment will help the patient to recover.

I ask myself what I know so that I view this scene in the hospital that critically. I get the sentence “True health comes from inside, it cannot only be made from outside”.

*Facet: Cream*

In the seventies pop and rock groups such as The Beatles or Cream were inspiring for many young people. Many kids bought a guitar and founded a band. Ultimately there developed a vibrant sub-culture that crossed into many areas of life.

*Facet: The feeling of being alive*

If I imagine I would have to die soon, I find that in principle I enjoy living, at least as long as the life circumstances are fairly tolerable. This aspect of living gladly is not dependent on certain pleasurable events.

*Facet: Mother and child*

I was born two months too early and after my birth I was in hospital for several weeks separated from my parents. After that time I was brought home to my parents and I experienced a very motivated and loving mother. This meant a new fulfillment.

## Step 7

The patterns in the facets:

*Pattern in “intensive care unit” facet:*

The person that might change (for instance by becoming healthy or learning something) needs to gladly change and this can be supported or impeded by the environment.

*Pattern in “Cream” facet:*

The young people do not like to learn, what is decreed for them, but what they see others do gladly. One option for fostering doing something gladly from outside is inspiration.

Inspiration means: You see me doing something gladly, and that helps you to do the same thing or a similar thing or another thing gladly or follow your way gladly.

It is helpful if the inspired person already feels an affinity towards the model.

If, however, someone does something with the *purpose* of making another person do it gladly it won't work or not that well. True inspiration includes leaving freedom.

*Pattern in “The feeling of being alive” facet:*

There seems to be a living gladly that is always accessible, but I have to heed it in order to benefit from it. I also have to appreciate it, for instance, by comparing it with the idea not to have it any more. In this case the arising of something that comes from another side seems to be a heeding of something that already exists and is always available.

*Pattern in “mother and child” facet:*

It is important that the situation before my mother was not with me is different from the situation after she was not with me. Previously I was a fetus and my mother was present as a womb so to speak, later I was an infant or baby and my mother came to me and cared for me.

What was before, does not fulfil itself in the same way later, it fulfils itself in a new way. It is a new-fulfilling. The new way was somehow open and unpredictable before, but it is not arbitrary as well.

There can be an interaction, which is fulfilling in a new way because both sides fit together in a new way.

### **Step 8**

In this step one crosses the pattern of a facet with other facets, one sort of looks at a facet in the light of the pattern of another facet.

I can, for instance, cross a pattern from the facet „Cream“ with the facet „Intensive care unit“ and say: Just as Cream have somehow already to fit to someone so that someone becomes inspired, an environment in the ICU would need to fit to the individual patient. It would be an error to assume that a specific design fits to everyone. To assume that would mean to think in the paradigm that changes can be “made”.

It is also interesting to cross the same pattern from “Cream” with the facet “The feeling of being alive”: It is not sufficient that the feeling of being alive is always available, it has to fit for the person to heed it and view it as worthwhile.

In fact the Indian spiritual path of Advaita builds on this as on heeding “Awareness”, but not every person thinks they want “to use this path as a new beginning” (German: “*etwas damit anfangen*”). Actually the same goes for both Awareness and Cream: It needs somehow to fit previously. More precisely it needs a readiness, to let it fit, an openness, which implies both the freedom to reject and the freedom to accept.

### Step 9

“Write freely what you are thinking at this juncture.”

On one hand there are many results from my previous attempt of theory construction that I have not yet had the opportunity to mention in this turn. On the other hand I found some new terms that form a good base for the next steps.

The facet I started with in my first step about the new-fulfilling in the relationship with my mother was new. In a sense in my life there is a series of new-fulfillings that can all be related to my mother and me: for instance relationships to girlfriends, my relationship to my mother when she had dementia and I cared for her and my relationship to a female guru called Mother (Mother Meera). By the way, in Tibetan Buddhism they are talking about a unity/oneness of mother-clear-light and child-clear-light at a certain stage of development.

So not only what happened around my birth is paradigmatic for living gladly but the relationship between a good mother in a very wide, often only metaphorical sense, and a child in a very wide, often only metaphorical sense.

### Step 10

In the steps 10 to 14 one goes on to build a formal, logical theory. I first choose three words or phrases from the material of the preceding steps and name them A, B and C. After that I write two sentences “A IS B” and “A IS C” and look how the two related terms (I would say, even in a Heideggerian sense) “belong into an identity”.

For the purpose of choosing three terms I can come back to what I wrote at the end of step 8:

“...not every person thinks they are able to or want to “start or begin something with this path” (as a literal translation of “*etwas damit anfangen*”). Actually it is the same

with Awareness and Cream, it needs somehow to fit previously. More precisely it needs a readiness, to let it fit, an openness, which implies both the freedom to reject and the freedom to accept.”

I needed to translate the German term “etwas mit etwas anfangen” rather literally as “using something to begin something”, because I want “new beginning” as one of my terms. A new beginning, fitting together and freedom are combined in the above paragraph.

My three terms are therefore:

A Fitting together

B Leaving room

and

C New beginning

I connect A and B:

Fitting together IS leaving room.

This leads me to:

If something really fits together, it need not force itself together and can therefore easily leave room. So, using the copula “is”, I can say:

Fitting together is something that can leave room.

I then connect A and C:

Fitting together IS a new beginning.

I find this sentence already right the way it is. When suddenly there is something fitting, it *is* an altogether new situation.

Besides I find an important connection for B IS A:

Leaving room is something that makes fitting together possible.

## Step 11

In step 11 one asks into the inherent relations between the terms.

What is fitting together *inherently*, so that it need not force itself together and can easily leave room?

I get: It somehow has already been a unity/oneness before.

What is fitting together *inherently* such that it already has a room-nature?

Answer: Not two separate things that fit together.

What is fitting together *inherently*, such that it is an altogether new situation?

I get: Love.

## Step 12

In this step I choose permanent terms and interlock them. First I formulate my illogical crux from step 2 in terms of what I found in step 11.

My sentence in step 2 was:

Living gladly cannot be made from outside but it cannot come on its own as well.

Respectively:

Something has to come from outside, so that it can come from inside.

In terms of step 11 I get:

**Living gladly comes out of/is/means/... unity/oneness and love between what fits-together based on freedom.**

I like that a lot: I have found a way of saying what living gladly *is*, and in terms of an inner structure. This way of expressing it brings back my felt sense of step 1.

As I understand it, the next task is to make the main terms interlocking. This means to find that each term implies the others. One can explain A in terms of B and C, B in terms of A and C, and so on.

When I play with that I get:

My *freedom* ("My" means: the way I mean it in my theory) is a freedom that arises from unity/oneness and love and leads to unity/oneness and love. If , for instance,

one forces someone to believe in unity/oneness and love by threatening them with hell, the forced person does not experience unity/oneness and love in the sense of my theory. (The same goes for the forcing person.)

My *unity/oneness* means a unity/oneness of what fits together and what fits together is connected in love and leaves freedom. The realization of fitting together in this sense opens a space in which what fits together can change in order to fit anew and fulfill anew.

*Love* in the sense of my theory is the relationship within a unity/oneness. In that unity/oneness what fits together simultaneously relates to each other and adapts to each other.

I can also introduce new terms and connect them with the existing ones and say for instance:

Life is the process from fulfilling to new-fulfilling, in which fitting respectively new-fitting occurs in freedom.

**Unity/oneness of and love between what fits in a context of freedom is the meaning of life.**

True health comes from the unity/oneness of and love between what fits in a context of freedom.

I can reverse the last sentence in order to *define* health in an alternative way:

Health is not primarily a smooth or normal functioning of a body mechanism, but it is unity/oneness of and love between what fits in a context of freedom.

According to my theory, living gladly is the real living healthy.

Learning gladly can arise from the model or inspiration of what fits.

Learning gladly can also arise from giving permission. Giving permission leaves room and leads to what fits.

Living gladly can extend by true gratefulness. “True” means: in a context of freedom. True gratefulness points to fitting together and confirms unity/oneness of and love between what fits.

I call the gladly that comes from “feeling of being alive” ground-gladly (“*Grundgerne*”) and I think it can be related to the spiritual Awareness-teachings (especially Advaita). Awareness is considered as a ground in that teachings, hence my term. Related to that I can write:

Ground-gladly is the experience of unity/oneness and love between awareness and what is awared in a context of freedom.

Love between human beings is the experience of fitting together, that means of inherent unity/oneness and love in a context of freedom.

Self-love is another version of experiencing unity/oneness and love in freedom and therefore makes a new beginning possible.

Living gladly extends by its nature, because its nature is unity/oneness and love in a context of freedom.

### **Step 13**

In my previous work on my theory I related gladly to life in general (living gladly) and more specifically to “gladly becoming healthy” (“medicine”) and “learning gladly” (“pedagogics”).

In this step I can use my theory as a model and apply it to other areas. Some ideas related to that:

#### **Ethics**

True ethics is based on doing things voluntarily and gladly that lead to unity/oneness and love and extend living gladly.

True ethics does not mean primarily a following of strict rules, but happens in actions that come out of true gladly.

It may help the world to do your thing because it may inspire others to do their thing.

**Person-centered psychotherapy:**

In my theory inspiring and being inspired is not contradictory to person-centeredness. It can, for instance, be person-centered to look for something that really inspires the client. A person-centered therapist can also inspire. This might be an alternative way of understanding Carl Rogers' recommendation that a therapist should be genuine.

**Spirituality:**

In the step 12 there are many statements that sound spiritual. My first sentence of my theory building talked about the "meaning of life" and the last developments explained that meaning in a new way. It feels as if I found an own spiritual theory. But isn't it presumptuous and heretical to even try that?

I think about the story of Rabbi Zusya, though, who said that after his death God would not ask him "Why were you not Moses?" but "Why were you not Zusya?" This means it might be spiritual if I am really Stefan, really find what fits for me, including the version of God or spirituality that fits to me.

Following from my theory, a dogmatic spirituality cannot be a true way to unity/oneness and love, since freedom, unity/oneness and love are interlocked. A dogmatic spirituality needs to *force* fundamentalist belief systems on human beings because both do *not* fit together.

But if spirituality is - contrary to most established teachings - about finding one's own statements about it, this means that TAE is an alternative spiritual path!

As for Advaita (the path via heeding Awareness) the idea of ever-present Awareness can be crossed with my mother child facet. This gives it another, more "emotional" taste.

**Step 14**

In this step one expands and applies one's theory in one's own field.

Gendlin comments: "This is the serious development of your theory. It may continue for years." I will only use the first suggestion of the "helpful details" and leave the rest to the coming years.

The first suggestion is to look for instances where the theory implies something one doesn't mean and look for distinctions that would correct the theory.

In my theory inspiring is something positive, that rather leads to learning-gladly, becoming-healthy-gladly or living gladly, in general: to an extension of the quality of gladly.

What I *don't* mean is a certain influence some people have experienced with Hitler, Stalin, fake gurus or bad gurus, which led them to do destructive things. Some terrorists also felt "inspired" by other terrorists.

So I have to distinguish inspiring the way I mean it from something that is sometimes also called inspiring, but which I would call seduction.

What is the difference between inspiring and seduction?

I think with seduction what fits between the inspiring model and the audience fits in terms of emotions, not in terms of felt sensing.

So I get that fitting together in my theory means a fitting together that includes the whole background, the whole implying, it is an inclusive fitting together.

Related to this it seems that the same model can have a seductive effect for one person and an inspiring effect for another one. This also applies to The Beatles and Cream, so I will have to correct my comments on the related facet.

Now I can add this inclusiveness as a new pattern to my theory and can, for instance, say, that my gladly, gladly the way I mean it in my theory, is an inclusive gladly, not, for instance, a one-sided pleasure, which is followed by a hang-over.

A felt sense is paradigmatic for inclusiveness and another example for living gladly. The forming and having of a felt sense feels good even if the problem it is about, is not solved or cannot be solved on a "technical" (=A Process Model chapter VII) level.

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