

The Impact of Various Practices on Enhancing the “Feeling” of Life

(Word Trăire in Romanian language)

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This morning, I went horse riding with my mare, Laponia, a practice that we have been doing in partnership for more than 20 years. I prefer to take my horses into the field, in nature, far from human settlements, and not in confined arenas, and I have the feeling that they prefer this option as well. Like many “horse persons”¹ would confess, practicing equestrianism is a form of meditation—one facilitated and enabled by the horse. As this sport and art requires our undivided attention and our complete presence, we experience an alternative state of consciousness, our body gets in sync with the horse, the mind quiets down, we are flooded by positive emotions, and we experience the “trăire” associated with embracing life with the same natural dare and excitement as the horse does.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I will discuss how various embodied or somatic practices (such as reiki, breathwork, active dreaming, meditation) can enhance our experience of life. Some subtle aspects of this “quality-of-life” experience are captured and expressed in the Romanian word *trăire* —a term that doesn’t have any straightforward English equivalent. Because the English language doesn’t have a way to specifically identify this mood, state, or quality of consciousness, in this paper I will first discuss or indicate aspects of *trăire* that might help make the concept more understandable for English readers.

¹ The notion of “horse persons” is meant to imply that the interaction with the horse changes humans fundamentally and in manifold ways (e.g., values, psychology, positioning towards life, etc.)

As a Romanian who has experienced *trăire* during or following various embodied practices, I will discuss and show how these practices can often lead to an experience of *trăire*.

UNDERSTANDING 'TRĂIRE'

The word *trăire* has a meaning in Romanian that points in the direction of “a conscious experience of life.” The three definitions prioritised in the dictionary² of the Romanian language about *trăire* are:

1. The fact of living, of existing;
2. Soul-level process, soul-level experience (lived with high intensity);
3. Method through which one can arrive at knowledge of reality based on (subjective) experience.

Looking more in-depth at the above definitions, it is interesting to observe how they slide from referring to one type of ontological experience, to an apparently very different one. Thus, “the fact of living, of existing” delineates the very (human, but not limited to) experience of being alive, and being conscious. Then, within definition number two, the authors introduced the word “soul” (in Romanian, *sufletesc* — feature or function of the soul), which leads to a transition from unconscious somatic processes to more conscious self-awareness, an experience of life lived with “higher intensity.” Furthermore, the third definition enriches the explanation of the term *trăire* by stating that it is conducive, even as a potential fully-fledged “method,” to our enhanced knowledge of reality. The notion of *trăire* seems to reflect what Christian de Quincey is defining as “feeling our *thinking*,” the way of knowing reality through embodied feeling, through (subjective) experience.

Writing this essay about the impact of experiencing other states of consciousness on the way that we know and feel life, as well on how we experience and position ourselves as a part of all creation, I was looking for a word that defines something more than the mere feeling, and that points in the direction of an overarching sentiment of being in sync with all creation, of embodied peace, and blissfulness.

² DEX – Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, 2009

The Romanian word *trăire* is nearly equivalent to English words such as “feeling,” “resonance,” “vitality,” “peace and joy,” “intersubjectivity,” “positive mood,” yet, even though they all are features encompassed by *trăire*, they don’t quite capture the same sense of blissful belonging to a sentient universe infused by peace and harmony, where meaning is available to us all the time.

In previous essays, I referred to “an inherent sentiment of blissfulness or joy attached to experiences of other states of consciousness,” and I would like to pinpoint that highlighting the types and features of *trăire* does not imply any attempt to escape the daily reality and the ordinary state of consciousness, yet it implies that we can become enriched, learn, tap into resources of creativity, grasp new information, and even heal during the alternative states.

The notion of *trăire* seems to be conceptually closest to the Sanskrit term for Ultimate Reality *Sat, Chit, Ananda* or, simply, *satchitananda*. According to Sri Aurobindo³, *satchitananda* is “... being, comprehension and delight. This is all that you can know fundamentally about yourself; you are That which Is, which, being, comprehends Its own existence, which, comprehending, has in its silence of being or in its play of comprehension a self-existent delight. *It is all we can know fundamentally and all we need to know, for, this once grasped and pursued in knowledge, the whole of life begins to unroll itself in its secret motion and purpose to our gaze.*” *Satchitananda* refers to the subjective experience of the ultimate unchanging reality, and it is mostly translated into English as “reality / existence consciousness bliss.”

ENHANCING TRĂIRE

In the upcoming paragraphs, I shall be looking at several energy work and consciousness-altering practices that I am familiar with, and I shall refer to how they impacted me. Moreover, I shall refer to how these practices enhance my *trăire* experience and how *trăire* also expands the understanding of how we know the world—both in ordinary and non-ordinary states of consciousness, thus not only showing how *trăire* refers to a state or mood

³ Sri Aurobindo, “Essays Divine and Human,” *The concept of Satchitananda*, quoted by The Indian Psychology Institute.

of consciousness, but also identifying some specific practices that can alter one's consciousness, in ways that are characterized by the term *trǎire*.

ENERGY WORK

1. Reiki energy practice and medicine

Reiki, made known to this world in the 20th century, yet with roots into an immemorial past, is an energy practice that relates with the all-encompassing universal energy, and that teaches us to perform energy healing for our own benefit and for other living beings on Earth.

When I attended my first Reiki training, I instantly felt connected to specific sensory and extra-sensory experiences of Reiki, by easily and fluently perceiving how “energy flows,” which are its various intensities, particular sensations in the palms (i.e., hot, cold, pinching, balanced...), and glimpses of information expressed in the form of an inner voice, instant images, or storylines in relation to the subjects of the Reiki channelling. Throughout many years, I embarked on a Reiki quest, which led me to become an Usui⁴ and Tibetan Reiki Master Teacher, to teach many Reiki classes, offer Reiki hands-on and distance healing and, eventually, to meet, in Kyoto, Japan—the person who is in our present time the closest to the lineage of Mikao Usui, the founder of Reiki.

The Attunements

Reiki training includes the so called “attunements,” which are energy procedures through which the teacher can facilitate, for the trainee, the activation of chakras and energy channels within the subtle body⁵, coupled with the implementation of specific Reiki symbols on the subtle body of the student. I remember that every time I benefitted from such an attunement, I experienced a combination of various types of *trǎire*—loss of the perception

⁴ Mikao Usui, Japanese doctor, was the creator of the Reiki practice, hence the certificates one receives after completing Reiki trainings bear his name.

⁵ The subtle body is a concept used by Eastern spiritual doctrines, and one that has multiple definitions, yet all of them conducive to the “energy body,” containing feelings, memory, thoughts, etc. To better clarify the term, I would refer to the concept of transphysical worlds coined by Eric M. Weiss (i.e., made up of the vital and the mental world, beyond the physical world), which further lead to explaining the transphysical / subtle matter, and consequently the transphysical / subtle body.

of the physical body boundaries within the subtle body, uplifting sensation, being extremely energised, or remembering lively dreams of the night. Below, I share one of my post-attunement experiences.

Above me there is another reality, to which I naturally belong. A circle shaped opening appears and at its borders several faces are looking down on me. They smile at me, they welcome me, they are enchanted by the fact that someone new is entering their realm, someone new is walking their path (i.e., the Reiki energy medicine path.) I look at them and I feel humbled yet overwhelmed by emotions. I am grateful and I feel at home, while my heart is full of bliss.

A Reiki Channel

While offering a Reiki session to others, we act as channels for the flow of energy, from the universal source (*reiki* = universal energy) through our subtle bodies, and then through our palms, to the receiver.

When working with horses and dogs, I always felt the energy passing through my body and flowing into their body, I had the sense of becoming one with them, completed by the sense of our physical boundaries fading. My perception of energy became stronger, and then when I got the feeling that one Reiki position has done the job and accomplished its energy effect on a certain body area, then it came together with a feeling of extraordinary joy, of completion, of arrival to destination, and of “all is well.” Thus, I noticed that when I was practicing the embodied aspects or reiki on others, it would lead to an experience of joy and relief in me. In this case, “*trăire*” represented for me the indicator that the energy work was completed and reached its effects.

In the case of humans, I had the same feeling associated with being a channel for the Reiki energy, and the sense that something like an independent “process” was going on at a deeper level, beyond our mere physical presence of two human beings. Moreover, in the case of human beings, when I engaged in a Reiki treatment, I perceived bits of information, in the form of images and messages that came to me without words, i.e., I suddenly “knew something” about that person, or about something going on in her / his life. In this case, the “*trăire*” implied new knowledge for me, relevant with regards to the healing of the person I

worked with. In most cases, I would have a dialogue with the person about the information received, and we would together assess the importance of it, and if it implied any actions from his/her side, in view of boosting the healing (e.g., giving up negative habits, making different life choices, etc.).

Receiving Reiki

I had the chance to visit the Jikiden Institute of Reiki in Kyoto, and to benefit from a Reiki treatment performed by five students from the school, and during that session the prevailing *trăire* was that of complex processes going on in my body, coupled with a profound state of relaxation, even sleep, from time to time. During the night that followed, I was “half awake” almost all the time, in that state between sleep and awake (hypnagogic / hypnopompic), and I felt that I was going through a deep process of healing, restoration, regeneration, and balancing, both at the level of the physical and subtle bodies. In my view, experiencing this “*trăire*” meant that a “deeper” intelligence was involved in putting things “in order” within my body, in re-establishing balance where it was needed, through subtle mechanisms.

Treatment on Self

While applying Reiki on myself, I usually get the same feeling of channelling the Reiki energy, and then the flow of energy infusing the entire body, of flushing through cells and organs, the feeling of harmony and centeredness, deep embodiment, of “everything is fine,” of some health fine-tuning going on. Furthermore, during the Reiki session, the inner voice might pop up with the same “thoughts without words,” just things that we suddenly “get / understand / know.” The overarching sentiment (*trăire*) is that of being in sync with life, of being present, of being a natural part of it, consequently being ready to live fully, to act from a “good place.”

2. Relaxation

I am including the practice of (conscious, mind-led) relaxation within the category of energy work, as it represents a very simple approach towards achieving deep rest and disconnecting from the daily state of awake consciousness. The prevailing feelings that I

witness during deep relaxation are those of the borders of the physical body vanishing, followed by the sensations of sinking, or of imponderability. The mind gets relaxed as well, as usually I progress from feet to head, so I come out of the experience feeling lighter, and invigorated. Hence, relaxation is another aspect of *trāire*.

3. Breathwork

Breathwork pertains to the same category of “energy practices,” and I am briefly referring to simple techniques of breathing through which we consciously exercise several types of breathing, starting from the lower-belly breathing, then diaphragm breathing, and then up, breathing with the entire capacity of the lungs. Such an exercise results in a feeling of replenishment, calmness, as well as (re)connection with the external environment. Another example would be the “four-times” breath exercise (i.e., breathing in at the count of four, stop breathing with lungs full at the count of four, exhaling at the count of four, and stop breathing with lungs empty at the count of four.) As this exercise leads to a lower pace of breathing (approximately 8-10 breaths per minute, by comparison with the average 13-15 breaths per minute,) we become calmer, and we enter a state of deep relaxation. Equally as the latter, breathwork is conducive and enhances the *trāire*.

4. Visualization and other practices of intentional healing

Energy work may be expanded to encompass, besides relaxation, other types of practices led by visualisation, by which we gain information about the state of balance of our subtle body, and energy centres⁶ or we visualise a certain action with the aim of healing, re-charging, cleaning, or balancing the state of our energy body. A basic exercise in this sense would be to visualise one flow of energy rising from the ground, and passing through the body, from below to above, and cleansing it, and then another flow of energy from above, flooding and charging us with fresh energy. In terms of the associated *trāire*, I would distinguish in these experiences the recognition, empowerment, and confidence due to the observation that there are already working mechanisms set in place between our physical body and the subtle body and vice versa.

⁶ The notion of “energy centres” or *chakras* in Sanskrit defines energy vortices that correspond to internal organs within the body.

Furthermore, one specific technique I find very useful is the so-called “chakra journey,” a diagnostic exercise that reveals the state of each of the seven energy centres. This practice involves visualising us “entering” each chakra, as if it were a cave. There, we identify colours, images, perceptions of light versus dark, dynamism versus stagnation, or any other shape or form the information might take. These should be performed as a “reality check” in relation to the outcomes, as usually there are symptoms at the level of the physical body corresponding to a low-performing energy centre, for example, a sense of strength associated with a high-performing chakra. Thus, the “*trǎire*” would boost our energy-awareness to reveal underlying or potential dysfunctions in the gross physical body.

To explain intentional healing, I am relying on the explanation provided by Christian de Quincey,⁷ according to which:

- Consciousness is the one purposefully directing energy from within, and sending the message “heal,” while the consciousness of the recipient’s cells participates in this meaning, and then directs the energy to move in ways to restore balance.
- As a matter of fact, all forms of so-called “energy healing,” reiki included, are essentially *intentional* healing, and are conducive to healing within the body of another person, via the same principle of “sharing meaning,” taking place during alternative states of consciousness.

CONSCIOUSNESS ALTERING PRACTICES

5. Active dreaming

The practice of “active dreaming” systematised by Robert Moss represents a means to operate within the “vital world” as defined by Eric M. Weiss, i.e., perceived by us during dreams of the night, lucid dreams, and containing places and independent individuals, operating according to their own wills. Active dreaming works with *imaginal matter*.⁸ As an example, I refer to “dream re-entry,” a basic technique of active dreaming, through which

⁷ *BlindSpots. 21 Good Reasons To Think Before You Talk*, Park Street Press.

⁸ Personal note: “Mundus imaginalis” defined by the French philosopher Henry Corbin, as “a world as ontologically real as the world of the senses and the world of the intellect, a world that requires a faculty of perception belonging to it, a faculty that is a cognitive function, a *noetic* value, as fully real as the faculties of sensory perception or intellectual intuition.”

we continue the thread of a dream of the night that intrigued us, to find out more about its content. For this, we choose an image, a pervasive one that came from the dream, and we use that image as a “portal” to more images, or a complete story line, that unfolds in a natural way.

Recently I had an important business meeting with a partner that would potentially become a key one for my company. While experiencing the alternative state of consciousness available to us effortlessly during sleep, I had a dream the night after the meeting, which presented a complete narrative about the way that the business partnership might unfold, while pointing out opportunities, as well as vulnerabilities. Of course, the “raw” story presented during the dream contained images and messages conveyed in a different “language” than we would use during the waking state of consciousness, nevertheless the way that those images and messages conveyed feelings, in their turn conducive to raising my attention to the details of the dream, as valuable information for future choices in relation to the business partnership, brought me to a conclusion that I received a very important “warning” on how to proceed in this case, in “real” life. Immediately after I woke up from the dream, I went through the “lightning dreamwork”⁹ —a 7 steps procedure focused on working with the information derived from a dream, for example by considering which were the feelings attached to the dream, which is the “reality check” (i.e., potential occurrence of the events in everyday life, and any connections), or choosing an “action” to take in waking like, as a consequence of the information received during the dream. This practice is meant to build a bridge between the feelings from the dream, and the thoughts and actions in waking state of consciousness. Moreover, it is meant to keep the information of the dream vividly in our memory, as the content of the dreams are usually forgotten.

As a conclusion, I would like to point out that, in terms of the *trăire*, I had a very strong sentiment of the fact that I received valuable guidance for the future, that the guidance was precise enough to point towards practical ways to avoid pitfalls and valorise the strong points of the business partnership. I even felt like I was gaining a “competitive advantage” over my business partner.

⁹ Procedure created by Robert Moss, within the practice of active dreaming.

Besides the joy of playing with the gift of imagination, which brings back the child in each of us, active dreaming triggers the explorer side of human beings, as we enter the alternative state of consciousness associated with (day)—dreaming, moved by the will to “find out more,” to learn more, to unveil information that perhaps is not available to us during the awake state. An Arabic proverb tells us “*The night is the academy of the dervish,*” suggesting that the person seeking (spiritual) knowledge should be paying attention to “vital occasions” (Eric M. Weiss) as alternative and perhaps more effective paths to self-discovery.

6. Shamanic journeying

I describe the *trãire* associated with “shamanic journeying” in a separate section here—because I define it as a deeper form of consciousness work, by means of which we go beyond asking questions and receiving valuable information, into “being found” by unexpected experiences, and even by other intelligences (i.e., human beings alive or departed, animals, non-physical entities, etc.)

I would like to provide the example of a shamanic journey initially triggered by a dream of the night (i.e., two giants made of lapis lazuli and turquoise stones meeting me in an urban landscape — skyscrapers, and busy streets — with a message about a tsunami or flood that was about to happen, yet bearing an encouraging message, that no harm will be done.) Given the outstanding appearance of the two giants, with body parts made of the two stones, I was eager to re-enter the dream. What came next was the gradual revealing (via several dream re-entries) of “their realm,” or, better said, “the realm where I could meet them.” Consequently, I would say that the storyline expanded, and I drew a map of the place, to be able to offer this is a distinct shamanic journey to other people that I work with.



I am on a mountain top, and everything is oversized — flowers, grass, mountains, and valleys. It is a gigantic landscape, where plants grow ten times taller than our human size. While approaching the edge of a cliff in this world, I see a dragon who is sleeping right there, a giant dragon, whose one single eye is of the size of a cinema screen. He opens his eyes for a while and looks at me, with no intention to move, yet allowing me to get a glimpse of several images within his eye.

This world belongs to someone else, to a tribe of Stone Giants, with their bodies made of lapis lazuli and turquoise. They welcome me to their circle. I passed many times the bridge over the chasm, leading to the circle of lapis lazuli and turquoise giants. Every time, I received new and valuable information, mostly through images and an inner voice.

From my point of view, this journey represents an example about how we can "map imaginal realms," as I felt guided to discover and memorize the map of another reality, as ontologically real as our ordinary reality. Furthermore, as I offered this journey to other people, they usually came back with guidance for future events, cautionary insights, or an overall sense of comfort and relief.

7. Meditation

There are, of course, many resources defining meditation, as well as a multitude of forms and techniques of meditation. For me, meditation begins by sitting in silence, with eyes closed, and continues in the same manner. Keeping our eyes closed already triggers an experience (i.e., plunging into our inner universe) and then, silence and lack of any external stimuli leads to the *trăire* of regaining our (inter)connectedness with the cosmos, coupled with a sensation of safety, protection by a higher power, and even gratitude for being alive and conscious.

To conclude, I would say that the overarching *trăire* gained through various energy practices as well as exploring other states of consciousness, consists of the sensation of *belonging to a kind and sentient universe, of glimpsing a deeper meaning for individual and collective existence, and of knowing that, deep inside, as well as out there, "everything is alright."* By introducing a Romanian word (*trăire*) into the discussion, my intention was to fine-tune some aspects of how we know the world.

According to Christian de Quincey,¹⁰ we know the world in various ways—e.g., through our *senses* (Scientist’s Gift), through *logic, reason, and language* (Philosopher’s Gift), through embodied feeling and ASCs (Shaman’s Gift), and through direct access to reality via intuition (Mystic’s Gift). From these four ways, I would say that the last two most closely match the notion of *träire*, nevertheless, there is at least one nuance that *träire* adds to the picture, and that is the all-encompassing, deep, and self-assertive sentiment of bliss, coupled with the unwavering inner knowing that we are an intrinsic part of a flawless, meaningful, and loving cosmos. I would title the *Träire’s* Gift as knowing the world through releasing, and letting ourselves wander and wonder, with the wind of consciousness “in our sails,” to new shores of wisdom.

When I experience träire,

my love for the sentient creation grows bigger.

¹⁰ *Radical Knowing*, Park Street Press.