

Tea and Sympathy

The Emotions in Chinese medicine, their Chinese Characters and a discussion of the differences between the normative terms for the emotions as found in various texts.

Five Emotions (Zhi) and Seven Affects (Qing)

In Chinese Medicine the emotions are understood in two ways. These are referred to as the Five *Zhì* (志) & Seven *Qíng* (情). These terms can both be translated as ‘emotions’. Maoshing Ni translates these as the ‘Five Emotions and Seven Affects’. The term ‘affect’ (as it is used in modern psychiatry) for *Qíng* (情) is quite a good choice because, it suggests the more pathological expression of the emotions.

The Five *Zhì* (志) [Wills/Minds] are understood to encompass the normal healthy emotional expressions of the Phases. The term *Zhì* (志) here is the same as the specific spiritual aspect associated with Water, the Five *Zhi* thus complement the Five Shen. One example of how we can see these as healthy emotions could be Anger, that as a normal and healthy emotion would be more like the use of the word ‘assertion’ in modern psychology.

The Seven *Qing* [Emotions/Affects] are more specific emotions usually associated with pathology. Just as with the External Pathogenic Factors, these can be the cause of disease, or the manifestation of imbalance. In the earlier chapters of the Su Wen the distinction between the *Zhi* and *Qing* is not specifically stated, but implied in the text.

The list of the five or seven emotions varies between texts. European books on acupuncture especially those of J. R. Worsley and Felix Mann have listed the Five Emotions as: Anger, Joy, Sympathy, Grief, and Fear.

Mme Dr. M. Hashimoto in her 'Japanese Acupuncture' has 'Worry' as the emotion of Earth.

Modern TCM books also vary in their lists of transliteration of the Seven Affects so that it is not immediately obvious which terms are equivalent.

Bensky & O'Connor have: Happiness, Anger, Worry, Pensiveness, Sadness, Fear and Terror. (18)

Giovanni Macciocia Lists: Anger, Joy, Worry, Pensiveness, Sadness, Fear, Fright. (130)

Essentials of Chinese Medicine List: Anger, Joy, Melancholy, Meditation, Grief, Fear, Fright. (44)

Nigel Wiseman lists the Five Minds as: Joy (喜 xǐ), Anger (怒 nù), Anxiety (憂 yōu), Thought (思 sī), Fear (恐 kǒng). The Seven Affects as Joy (喜 xǐ), Anger (怒 nù), Anxiety (憂 yōu), Thought (思 sī), Sorrow (悲 bēi), Fear (恐 kǒng) and Fright (驚 jīng).

In particular it is customary in many publications to show 'Thinking' as the primary emotion associated with Earth and by inference 'over-thinking' as the pathological expression. Hicks, Hicks & Mole in their 'Five Element Constitutional Acupuncture' comment on this difference and suggest that 'Sympathy' was an innovation of J. R. Worsley. () However, Felix Mann in his 1962 'Acupuncture: The Ancient Chinese Art of Healing' also lists

‘sympathy’ which would suggest that this was derived from a source in Japan or Taiwan ().

The main difference that is noted is the difference between ‘sympathy’ and ‘worry’ and ‘thinking’ as the emotion associated with Earth.

Some of this confusion appears to stem from confusion over the multiple meanings of the character *yōu* (憂) that has differing meanings, as either ‘worried, anxious’ or ‘sadness, grief’, according to context. The character for ‘thought’ (思 *sī*), is often given as the emotion of Earth even though we shall see that it is not listed as such in the first sections to introduce the primary emotions.

The Five Wills are introduced in Chapter 5 of the Su Wen.

人有五臟化五氣，以生喜怒悲憂恐。

The Five viscera in man produce five energies which in turn are responsible for the five emotions, namely, joy, anger, sadness, grief and fear.

Henry Lu

Here is a comparison of the translations as used by Henry Lu, Ilza Veith and Maoshing Ni for the emotions in the above passage, and a later one in Chapter 19. I will argue that Maoshing Ni’s translation is the most correct.

	Henry Lu p.33	Ilza Veith p.117	Maoshing Ni p.19
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	(Henry Lu p.131)	(Ilza Veith p.181)	(Maoshing Ni p.79)
喜 xǐ	Joy	Joy	Happiness (Over-excitability)
怒 [怵] nù	Anger	Anger	Anger (Rage)
悲 bēi	Sadness (Worry)	Sympathy (Pity)	Sadness (Grief)
憂 [忧] yōu	Grief	Grief	Worry
恐 kǒng	Fear	Fear	Fear and fright

It is immediately apparent that:

- *Sī* (思) does not appear in these passages in Chapter 5 or in Chapter 19 of the Su Wen.
- Ilza Veiths translation of *bēi* (悲) as ‘Sympathy’ or ‘Pity’ may be based on an attempt to make the translation fit the customary terminology as per Worsley and Mann. It is not a well supported translation of *bēi*, and if this is understood to be the Earth emotion we have a problem since *bēi* is not strongly associated with Earth in the text.

In later parts of Chapter 5 of the Su Wen we are given more information on the emotions, but the characters used vary from the introductory statement.

Su Wen Chapter 5 (Following on from passage quoted previously)

Discussing the East

It corresponds to Anger (怒 nù) in the emotions (志 zhì)

Anger (怒 nù) damages the Liver

Sorrow (悲 bēi) overcomes Anger (怒 nù)

Discussing the South

It corresponds to Joy (喜 xǐ) in the emotions (志 zhì)

Joy (喜 xǐ) damages the Heart

Fear (恐 kǒng) overcomes Joy (喜 xǐ)

Discussing the Center

It corresponds to Contemplation (思 sī) in the emotions (志 Zhì)

Contemplation (思 sī) damages the Spleen

Anger (怒 nù) overcomes Contemplation (思 sī)

Discussing the West

It corresponds to Grief (憂 yōu) in the emotions (志 zhì)

Grief (憂 yōu) damages the Lung

Joy (喜 xǐ) overcomes Grief (憂 yōu)

Discussing the North

It corresponds to Fear (恐 kǒng) in the emotions (志 zhì)

Fear (恐 kǒng) harms the Kidney

Contemplation (思 sī) overcomes Fear (恐 kǒng)

The main discrepancy to account for are that six characters appear because Sī (思) has been added to the original list.

- Thinking (思 sī) here appears as the ‘emotion’ of Earth.
- Grief (憂 yōu) is given as the emotion of Metal

However, Sorrow (悲 bēi) overcomes Anger (怒 nù)

Based upon the text above we would end up with the following table. But neither column matches the emotions as listed in the introduction.

Phase	Primary Emotion	Overcoming Emotion
Wood	Anger (nu 怒)	Grief (bei 悲)
Fire	Joy (xi 喜)	Fear (kong 恐)
Earth	Thought (si 思)	Anger (nu 怒)
Metal	Sorrow (you 憂)	Joy (xi 喜)
Water	Fear (kong 恐)	Thought (si 思)

In order to try and make sense of these discrepancies let us examine just two of these characters in detail: yōu (憂) and bēi (悲).

yōu 憂 - walk slowly (攴) with a troubled head (頁) and heart (心)

[忧] **worry**, anxiety (Oxford*, Zhong Wen)
sad, grieved, grief, melancholy (Oxford CD version!)
grieved, anxious, in mourning, melancholy (Wieger)

One primary thing to bear in mind is that Chinese characters have differing meanings according to context. Often we have to know which meaning is intended before we know which to use in a particular context. A famous example of this is the first line of the Tao Te Ching.

道，可道，非恆道

The Tao that can be told is not the constant Tao.

Tao Te Ching – Gia Fu Feng

In other words the character Tao (道 Dao) appears three times in the line and in the second instance is understood to mean speech. Literally: The Dao that can be dao(ed) is not the constant Dao. It is hard to translate Chinese without knowing to some extent the intended meaning. The Chinese Classics read more like aide memoires than explanatory texts. This leads to a somewhat circular process.

It appears that two main translations of yōu (憂) can be supported by the dictionary: ‘Worry’ or ‘Grief’. Claude Larre prefers to use the term ‘oppression’ generically (145). Claude Larre also states that yōu (憂) is associated primarily with Metal-Lung, and also with Earth-Spleen, but is associated more than any other emotion, with all the organs (145). I will

argue below that this is partly misleading because different meanings are actually intended according to context. However, it is interesting to note here the ‘central’ importance of Earth that is used to refer to health. For example where four seasonal pulses are described in the classics we find the Earth type ‘moderate pulse’ is the description of the healthy pulse. Once again if we assign *yōu* to Earth it is consistent with the character of Earth that the emotion is considered to have a wide effect.

It is of note that ‘anxiety’ as previously mentioned is given by Wiseman as a translation of *yōu* is also represented by a variation on the Character *yōu*.

Yōu 憂 Worry, Sorrow, Anxiety; Oxford Chinese Dictionary – CD Version

Van Nghi in a reference to a passage in Chapter 6 of the Ling Shu refers to this as ‘worry of the heart’. (120). This is an apt description of the character. It would thus seem that ‘worry’ would be the preferred term for *yōu* (憂) within the Seven Qing. Various characters denoting Anxiety are more frequently associated with the Heart.

bēi 悲 -Heart (心) and no (非) a contradiction or negation

grieve, be sad, sympathize (Wieger)

sad, sorrowful, melancholy. (Oxford)

Bēi (悲) appears to most commonly be intended to mean sadness **or** grief,

but sorrow or melancholy are justifiable translations.

It is especially fortunate for this discussion that in Chapter 8 of the Ling Shu the characters for emotions are given in dual terms, (e.g. bēi āi 悲哀) that in many cases suggest excess of the emotion, but also seem to clarify the intended meaning. For example:

“When [excess] sadness (悲 bēi 哀 āi) causes harm to internal organs, the soul (魂 hún) may be impaired, because the Liver is the store of the soul.”

(Lu 727)

悲 bēi – grieve, sad, sorrowful;

哀 āi – grief, sorrow, lamentation

The intended meaning is thus ‘grief (or sadness) and lamentation’.

Claude Larre describes *bēi āi* (悲哀) as the appropriate expression of sadness and grief. *Yōu* (憂) clearly can mean grief, but suggests extreme grief (or unresolved in modern psychology terms). Claude Larre quotes the following passage that makes the relation of all these characters very clear.

At the death of his father, a son wept without interruption for three days; for three months he removed neither the arm band nor the hemp belt; for a year his thoughts were filled with profound feelings of **sadness** *bei ai* [悲哀] (he wept morning and night). His **grief** *you* 憂 lasted for three years.

LiJi, Couvreur II, p 704, revised translation. Quoted by Claude Larre.

Bēi (悲) does also appear in connection with Heart. But here we can see that it could be interpreted as referring to something more like bù lè (不樂) ‘lack of joy’ rather than the ‘grief or sadness’ of Metal. This is another idea that J. R. Worsley described that is not commonly mentioned in many texts.

Now in the the same pasage of Chapter 8 of the Ling Shu as quoted above we have the dual term:

An excess of worry (愁 chóu 憂 yōu) will cause harm to the sentiment (意 yì), because Spleen is the store of sentiment.”

(Lu 727)

愁 chóu – worry, be anxious

憂 yōu – worry, anxiety.

In other words Henry Lu has assumed (I believe correctly) that the pairing of yōu (憂) with chóu (愁) clarifies the intended meaning of yōu (憂) in this context as ‘worry’.

For completeness here are the dual Terms from Chapter 8 of the Ling Shu

恐 kǒng - fear, dread, terrify, intimidate 懼 jù - fear, dread	Translated as ‘Enduring Fear’ by Henry Lu. Persistence in time is suggested by the dual characters.
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愁 chóu - worry, be anxious 憂 yōu - worry, anxiety	Translated as 'Excess of worry' by Henry Lu
悲 bēi – grieve, sad, sorrowful 哀 āi – grief, sorrow, lamentation	Translated as 'Sadness' by Henry Lu. Not clear why he did not add 'excess' in this case. However this is a common expression for 'grief and lamentation'.
喜 xǐ – happy, please, like, be fond of, 樂 lè – happy, joyful	Translated as 'excess joy', however, this combination of characters is also translated as 'joy and elation or pleasures' with slightly different connotations of the two characters.
怒 nù	This is the only character that appears to be straightforward and so only one specific character is used, the dual terms used means 'swelling Anger'

If 'Worry' is the correct term for yōu then to be consistent with the concept of zhi we have to find a positive expression of this. According to Claude Larre yōu (憂) can also mean 'concern' and he comments:

Is it possible to have a positive meaning of yōu [憂], because there is a good meaning of all emotions? Not in medical texts, but in other texts we can have legitimate *you*. For example, if you are the emperor or if you are a practitioner you can have in your heart and in your head for a certain time, and up to a certain point, concern as to how to rule or how to treat. Especially in Confucian texts! In Daoist texts there is not so much, they say no you should not have this kind of concern even for the best of intentions it is too dangerous, and exhausts your

vitality and you are less able to cope with the situation... In these texts *you* is very close to obsessive-thought, or thinking which can become obsessive.

Larre 148

And thus perhaps the positive meaning of *sī* (思) as “Contemplative-Thought” became favoured in medical thinking. Perhaps the Taoists viewed dis-passion as more representative of the balanced state of health, if Buddhism with its emphasis on com-*passion* had had a greater role perhaps “Concern” (憂 *yōu*) may have been preferred.

It is not a big leap from the concept of ‘concern’ to the idea of ‘sympathy’ as taught by J. R. Worsley. Hicks, Hicks and Mole explain sympathy as ‘the need to feel cared for or understood’. (32).

TCM

From the above information we can also examine the usual terms for the emotions within TCM texts. We can thus understand why Earth is assigned two emotions in the Seven Qing: *Yōu* (憂) and *bēi* (悲) although associated with different organs, both deplete the Qi, and *sī* (思) although also associated with Earth causes qi to be knotted.

Conclusions

It would seem that we can not make a simple character to Phase-Organ association of the emotions, because characters are used with different

meanings depending on the context. Emotions are also seen as encompassing a range from healthy normal expressions to pathology, and thus one term is often not adequate to express this range.

Bēi (悲) conveys the idea of ‘Grief **or** Sadness’. In relation to Metal a more extreme feeling may be suggested hence ‘sorrow or melancholy’ may capture the idea better. It can also be used in relation to heart where one would suppose that an emotion akin to *bù lè* (不樂) (lack of joy) would be indicated.

The use of Yōu (憂) appears confusingly in relation to Metal-Lung and Earth-Spleen as two different meanings are intended according to context. In relation to Earth the more normalized translation would be ‘Worry’, in relation to Metal it means a pronounced or unresolved ‘Grief’. As a healthy emotion ‘Concern’, it is closer to the intent of J. R. Worsley’s idea of ‘Sympathy’.

Suggested translations and elaborations of the Five Zhi would be: Anger (Assertion), Joy, Concern, Thinking, Grief, Fear; and of the Seven Qing would be: Anger (Frustration and Unfulfilled Desires), Elation (or Pleasures), Worry, Over-thinking, Sadness **or** Grief, Fear, and Fright.

Many of J. R. Worsley’s teachings have been thought of as either his own innovation or derived from a more esoteric tradition. It would seem from examination of Classic texts that his teachings (as with this one example) although differing from the received principles of modern TCM are well founded in the Classics.

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