

孝 (XIAO)

古有孝經一書 詳言倫常之道 蓋倫常一日不滅 即天理一日不亡

The Sutra of XIAO (Filial Piety) written in ancient times, expounds the way of the "Cardinal Constant of Human Relationships¹". Fundamentally, as long as the Cardinal Constant of Human Relationships is maintained, the conscience of Heaven will not be destroyed.

Note¹: The Cardinal Constant of Human Relationships has five orders. They are: Father and Son, Ruler and Subject, Husband and Wife, Brothers, and among Friends.

故倫常者 天地之理之所載 即天地之氣之所行也

Thus, in the Cardinal Constant of Human Relationships, which comprises the conscience of Heaven and Earth, inheres the spiritual comportment of Heaven and Earth.

倫常有五 以父子為首 故古人以孝 為百行之先

Among the five orders of the Cardinal Constant of Human Relationships, Father and Son is the first set. Accordingly, ancient people traditionally regarded XIAO (Filial Piety) as the first priority of all comportment.

今人不知孝道 其病根在於不知父母之恩
非不知父母之恩也 知之而不十分切實

Today's people are ignorant of filial duty. The root of the problem is that they don't recognize the meaning of parental kindness.

Or, if they do, they only perceive it superficially, not thoroughgoingly.

故雖有孝順之心 卻又被貨財妻子所損壞 而又無人提醒 是以一片孝心
長為私慾所隱伏而不得伸 此乃世人不孝之病根也

Even if the people have XIAO in their hearts, their greed, or influences by their spouse and children, may obscure XIAO within. Moreover, they lack anyone giving them right advice. Thus, the essence of XIAO is contravened by giving vent to desire, which, at its root, makes people behave without XIAO.

茲吾略言父母之恩 以為天下告焉

Let me say a few words about parental kindness as advice to all of you.

人試思未有身體之前 果何人所生
既有身體之後 果何人所養
饑餓也 何人乳哺
寒凍也 何人衣裹
啼號也 何人保抱
溲溺也 何人盥洗
麻痘病症也 何人醫救
飲食言語也 何人教督
仔細思之 而父母之恩可知矣

Let us try to recall before we had our bodies, who gave birth to us?
After we had our bodies, who brought us up?
When we were hungry, who fed us?
When we were cold, who provided us with clothes?
When we cried, who carried us?
When we got dirty, who cleaned us?
When we felt sick, who called doctors for us?
When we learned eating and speaking, who taught us?
If we reflect carefully, we will realize how full of care and caring deeds our parents were to us!

父母一團心血 必完全用於子女之身 而後得以成立
故十月懷胎 三年哺養 為父母者 不知受多少艱難困苦 擔多少駭怕憂愁

Parents exert their entire effort for their children in order to feel they have accomplished something worthwhile.
So, during nine months of pregnancy and the first three years of infancy, parents confront uncountable difficulties and bear the burdens of much worry and fear.

偎乾就濕 捨己救兒 水火湯刀 關心掉慮
時乎嘻笑 則心為之喜 時乎啼哭 則忍耐其煩
己未飯而先防兒女之饑 己未眠而先調兒女之宿
饑飽必期得當 冷暖尤恐失宜

When parents and baby sleep together and the baby gets wet, parents swap the baby to their dry side and they sleep on the wet side. Thus parents disregard themselves but give to their child. Parents are concerned for their children, looking out for them whenever water, fire, hot water or sharp objects are nearby.
When children smile, parents are happy in their hearts.
When children cry, parents are patient amid the annoyance.
Parents protect their children from starving before concerning themselves with their own meals. Parents prepare their children's beds before worrying about their own sleep.
Parents always try to prepare their children's food on time and are afraid of providing unsuitable clothes for different types of weather.

一旦遇有疾病 為父母者 不謂子之幼弱難養 反怨己之調理失時
採藥求醫 禱神問卜 恨不得將身代替

If their children get sick, parents do not complain, say, that the weakness of the children caused the difficulty of upbringing. They blame themselves for neglecting to care for the children better. They obtain medicine, call for a doctor, pray to the gods, or seek out fortune tellers for help. Inwardly, they wish they themselves were the sick ones, not the children.

若或出外遠行 父母亦常牽心罣意 卜問歸期 即果早去遲來 亦必倚門而望

If their children go for a long trip, parents not only worry and think continually of them, but also long to know when the children will come home. Even though they know that their children leave home early and would come home late, parents still desire for them to return home sooner.

此皆父母生我 育我 撫我 教我 厚我 望我之恩情 人所不可一日忘者也

These are the parental kindness: giving me birth, bringing me up, loving me, teaching me, and investing me with privilege and anticipation. As human beings, we shouldn't let a day go by without remembering these kindnesses.

至於成立 則又延師教讀 不惜俸金 擇配完婚 多耗經費
甚或苦積資財 購置田宅 以為子孫衣食居住之計

Once their children have grown up more, parents are concerned with providing them the best education, and helping them to look for the best mate for marriage, even though the process be time consuming and expensive. Parents may even spend their life savings to buy houses for their offspring so that their children can have homes at a later time.

故父母自壯至老 一生一世 經營籌畫 無一非出於愛子之心

Thus, from beginning to end, the parents' time is used to plan for the children, and wholly given in their parental love for their children.

噫 父母畢生精血 盡銷磨於子女之身 及子女成立 而父母日漸衰老
倘不及時孝養 父母之恩 將何以報耶

Alas, the life energy of parents is expended for their children. As children grow up and their parents get old, it is best that we repay our parents kindness, lest we find the time gone to do so later.

俗云 養子防老 積穀防饑

父母之千辛萬苦 以教養其子 無非望其子之卓然有成 為老年侍奉之計

There is an old saying, "Raise children for your old age; save up rice for the time of famine." Parents, who struggle against difficulties to bring up their children, have nothing for themselves but the anticipation that their children will be able to establish themselves and succeed so that the parents in their elder years can rely upon their children now grown.

乃世人不體其意 不念其恩 反謂父母為造人之機械

其生養 其教誨 其婚嫁 皆事之所當為 無所謂恩 亦無所謂報

However, people today tend to ignore their parents' intentions and kindness. Indeed, they even sometimes just think that their parents were merely supposed to be the means of reproduction that produced their own selves. They presumptuously assume that their upbringing, education and marriage ought to be provided to them. Apparently, no such thing as kindness or repaying gratitude occurs to them.

不知羊有跪乳之仁 烏有反哺之義

禽獸尚能報本 而人反忘父母之恩 不知孝養之道 豈非禽獸之不若乎

Few consider that goats will kneel to feed milk to their parents, and even crows as well regularly feed their parents.

Though even animals will repay their parents, many people forget the kindness of their parents and are blind to the way of XIAO. Are we inferior to mere animals?

凡人在初生之時 一刻不離父母

及半年一載 能認人面目之時 在父母懷中則喜 若別人抱之則啼

自三四歲至十四歲 饑則向父母求食 寒則向父母索衣

When a baby is born, it always wants to be near its parents.

Until the baby is between six months and one year, and begins recognizing people, the baby is happiest when in its parents' arms. The baby may even cry when it is held by others.

From three, four years old to fourteen, the child will ask its parents for food when hungry and for clothes when cold.

以前時日 人人皆知親愛父母

Up to this age, everyone has great affection for their parents.

及至娶有妻妾 增出房中幾許恩愛 則與父母間隔一層矣

及至生有子女 增出膝前幾許恩愛 又與父母間隔一層矣

But when a person has married and there is added to one's life conjugal love with one's spouse, a significant increment is added to the distance between one's parents and the person.

And then when the person has children and thus is added to one's life another intimate love, more distance widens between the person and his/her parents.

幸而遇賢孝之妻子 則猶為家庭之福

If luckily the person's spouse and children be kind and filial obedient, they will nonetheless be a fortunate family.

若遇不賢之妻 不孝之子 彼則於枕邊論姑舅之短長 此則於膝下談公婆之厚薄

三言二語 蓄怨心頭 反覺父母為不是

日深月久 妻子漸親 父母漸疏 妻子漸厚 父母漸薄

But if the person has an unkind spouse and disobedient children, the person's spouse will find fault with the in-laws' behavior, and the person's children will complain about their grandparents' unfairness.

Bearing these grievances in mind, the person begins to mistakenly believe that something is wrong with his/her parents.

As time goes by under these circumstances, the person grows closer to his/her spouse and drifts farther away from his/her parents. The person showers his/her spouse with privilege but treats his/her parents with indifference.

於是心目中 祇知有妻子 不知有父母

妻子之凍餒必調理 父母之凍餒若罔聞

妻子之疾病必醫治 父母之疾病且放棄

衣裳飲食 先妻子而後父母

微癡曲過 怨妻子而責父母

Thus, the person's mind primarily is concerned with his/her spouse and little, if any at all, with his/her parents.

When the person's spouse or children feel cold, the person does everything in order to warm them. On the other hand, if the person's parents be cold, the person pretends not to know it.

If the person's spouse or children get ill, the person bends every effort and finds ways to cure them. But if the person's parents suffer with sickness, the person carelessly gives up on their plight.

New clothes and good meals are given to one's spouse or children first, before his/her parents.

When problems or trouble happen, the person forgives his/her spouse or children, but not his/her parents.

噫 試思十四歲以前 何曾有妻 何曾有子
試思二三歲以內 何事非父 何事非母

Alas, let's think about the time before a person was fourteen years old. Where was his/her spouse then? Where were his/her children?

Or when a person was two and three years old, in what matters didn't the person rely on his/her father? What necessity was not provided by his/her mother?

俗語云 飲水記前情 不有父母 安有我身 不有我身 安有妻子

There is an old saying, "We always think about the wellspring of water when we drink!"
If it weren't for my parents, I would not exist! And, if I didn't exist, I wouldn't have a spouse!

水有源 木有本 仔細思念 則前此之生育我者父母也 撫我者父母也
教誨我者父母也 婚配我者父母也

As water has its origin and wood has its own source, when I carefully think about it, my origin and my source are my parents. Bringing me up was my parents' doing; educating me was my parents' doing and helping me to get married was my parents' doing.

父母非馬非牛 而為我勞苦一世 父母非奴非僕 而為我經營一生

My parents were not horses or cows, but they worked hard for me all their lives. Parents are not slaves or servants, but they plan for me and do all to aid me during their entire lives.

父母之於我有如此大德深恩 而我反謂父母為造人之機械
反謂父母之生養教誨 本其分所當為 是真禽獸之不若矣

My parents have given me the capacity for great virtue and gratitude. But when I proclaim that parents were only mere means of reproduction to produce my ungrateful self, who, I take it for granted, are supposed to raise me, educate me, and provide for me, then I speak as if these acts are really hardly more than those done by animals.

吾觀天下不孝之人

父母或需一物 則生慳吝之心 殊不知我之身體 原為父母所生成 何況身外之物耶

I have seen today's people who behave without XIAO.

If their parents need anything from them, they respond with the heart of a miser. These people don't realize that their very bodies were given at birth by their parents and that they should not be so stingy with the things that are outside their bodies.

父母吩咐一事 則生推諉之心 殊不知君欲臣死 不得不死 父欲子亡 不得不亡
死亡尚且不避 何況勞苦易為之事耶

If their parents tell them to do something, they try to shift the responsibility. Such people don't realize that, in the period of feudalism, if a ruler wanted to execute an officer, the officer had to submit; if a father needed his child to die, the child had no choice but to be sacrificed. If people in feudal times could be obedient in the face of death, how on earth can the irresponsible people of today dare to avoid doing easy things for their parents?

吾又觀天下不孝之人

父母責罵一言 笞打一杖 則嗔之恨之 甚至怒目反拳 使父母呼天籲地
及遇權貴之人 則甘心受其辱罵而無言

I have observed today's people who behave without XIAO.

If their parents yell at them or punish them, they feel hatred and anger toward their parents. Even more outrageous, some of these people lash out with their fists against their parents and torment them into a state of utter degradation. Ironically, when working for arrogant and authoritarian bosses, these people meekly bear insults and scolding without a sound.

噫 使能以趨承權貴之心 趨承父母 則性氣自然和平 而孝心即於此發動

Alas, if these people would even turn around and adopt toward their parents the very deference they accord arrogant and authoritarian bosses, their temper would be tamed and calmed. Thus, in their hearts, XIAO could then be awakened.

然又非所云孝也 不過免觸父母之怒而已

However, such a type of deference is still not XIAO itself, but only a way to avoid infuriating one's parents.

夫父母之罵我打我 無非責望成人 並非含有惡意

When my parents reprove or punish me, it is nothing but correction in the hope that I can be well prepared for a successful life in society in the future. There is no bad intention.

即或老耄昏聩 非理相加 為子者亦當欣然領受 不敢稍有恨心

蓋以天下無不是的父母

Even though parents may be old and complain irrationally, I, as their child, should still accept their behavior willingly, without resentment or hatred, because in this world parents must never be assumed intentionally wrong toward their own child.

即令父母有所不是 而為其子者 不能以是非之理相繩也

Or, if parents might be wrong, their child should not engage in accusations as if to judge them.

吾又觀天下不孝之人

對妻妾則和顏悅色 對父母則暴氣粗言 對兒女則痛癢相關 對兄弟則秦越相視

I also have observed some other people who behave without XIAO.

They treat their spouse pleasantly and kindly, but treat their parents impudently and roughly. They bond with their own children, but they deal with their sibling as if no business between them existed.

殊不知父母在前 妻妾在後 失妻妾則可再娶妻妾 失父母不能再有父母

These people scarcely understand that their parents come first and their spouse must come second. If a spouse is lost, one can always remarry; if parents are lost, they are irreplaceable.

又不知兄弟在前 兒女在後 失兒女可以再生兒女 失兄弟不能再有兄弟

These people don't understand that siblings come first and children come after. If a child is lost, another child can be begotten; If siblings are lost, they are irreplaceable.

石子有言 人能以愛妻妾之心愛父母 則無有不孝

人能以疼兒女之心疼兄弟 則無有不友

能孝能友 而人子之道得矣

Scholar Sha said, "If human beings could love their parents as much as they do their spouses, there would be no people who behave without XIAO. If human beings could love their siblings as much as they do their children, there would be no siblings who hate each other."

Exhibiting both XIAO and brotherly love correctly performs the duty of a person.

是故曾子之事親也 其妻蒸梨不熟 而欲出之

For instance, Scholar Jun¹ once performed his filial duty in this way: one time his wife didn't steam a pear properly for his mother, and so he deserted his wife.

Note¹: Scholar Jun, a student of Confucius, had supreme Filial Piety but an impulsive personality. He explained as the reason why he deserted his wife that it didn't matter if his wife did not listen to him about the pear; it did matter that the not-well-cooked pear might choke his old mother to death.

張範之遇賊也 將子代姪 以延其兄弟之後

Cheng Fan's (AD 220-265 Wei Dynasty) son and nephew were both kidnapped. Cheng approached the kidnappers to redeem the boys, but the kidnappers would only allow one of the boys to be released. Faced with this condition, Cheng redeemed his nephew instead of his son. The kidnappers were deeply affected by Cheng's righteousness and released both of the boys.

於此可見父母之與妻妾 兄弟之與兒女 其輕重有天淵之別也

From the above, we see no comparison in importance as between parents and spouse, nor as between siblings and one's offspring.

且夫孝之一字 自其大者言之 則自立身以至於仁民愛物 其事業固非常人所能

Moreover, the meaning of the character XIAO, considered in its broadest sense, begins with the way one behaves oneself and extends therefrom to love accorded to everyone and every object. XIAO is most certainly not easily lived in its fullest sense by ordinary people.

而自其小者言之 則一在養父母之身 一在安父母之心 斯二者 乃人子之所易為也

But from a less demanding point of view, the character XIAO commits each one to attend to one's parents' bodies and to reassure their hearts. These two ways of living XIAO are simplified enough for any offspring to perform them.

何謂養父母之身

蓋父母之身 乃吾身之所自出也 吾知愛吾之身 而不知愛父母之身 是舍本而逐末也

What does "attend to one's parents' bodies" mean?

Our own bodies came from our parents' bodies. If we only take care of our own bodies and take no concern with our parents' bodies, we attend to trifles, while neglecting essentials.

但養身可分為四

However, attending to parents' bodies can also be divided into four categories.

(一) 曰飲食

凡奉親者 無不欲力求珍饈 羅列甘旨 在富貴之家 固易於措設 若貧門賤戶 菽水可以承歡

1) Diet

Everyone who attends to his parents attempts to provide as splendid a menu of delicacies as possible to them. In a wealthy family, such special food is certainly provided without difficulty. But even in a poor family, merely having rice soup to serve can be a joyous expression of XIAO.

故家常蔬菜 祇要味汁調和 生熟中節 不可任意潦草
若有美食 先奉父母 但能博得父母一日之歡 即為人子一日之孝

Thus, although it is quite acceptable to offer a simple meal, make sure that the food is mild to the taste, neither rare nor overcooked, and attractive.

Any delicious food must be served to parents first. If we can give our parents a day of happiness, we perform a day of a son's XIAO.

至於年老氣衰 脾胃虛弱 所陳食品 必需香美軟熟 易於消化之物
若生冷粘膩 堅實難化者 則不可進之 以生其病

When parents are old, and their stomachs become weak, the meals served must be good to the smell, taste good, be soft, well-done and easy to digest.

If the food is cold, sticky, hard, or difficult to digest, don't serve it to your parents because they might get sick on it.

此飲食之不可不調理者也

Accordingly, their diets must be attended to carefully.

(二) 曰衣服

凡富貴之家 固不難採辦錦繡

若寒素之子 即平常布服 祇需冷暖合宜 換洗周密 亦可以安慰父母

2) Clothing

For a wealthy family, the finest clothes are easy to obtain.

In case of an indigent family, even common clothing is acceptable. However, make sure that the clothes are suitable, considering the weather at any given time. Change and wash parents' clothes frequently. All these measures reassure and comfort parents.

古人有以磚炙熱 布包置於足後者 有以錫造壺 熱水置於被內者
因老年人火氣不足 遂以他物溫之 亦曲禮冬溫之意也

In olden times, some people heated bricks, wrapped them in cloth and placed them beneath their parents' feet. Or else they used tin pots with hot water to warm their parents' blankets. This was rightly done because old people have poor blood circulation, and their children saw the need to use material aids to keep their parents warm. These acts of offspring also convey a message of filial piety from offspring to parents.

漢黃香年方九歲 夏則以扇拂其父母之床 冬則以身煖其父母之被
太守劉護表而異之 彼以年小行孝 況年長而不知乎

In the Han Dynasty (BC 206 to AD 220), when Wong Hon was nine years old, he used a fan to fan his parents' bed during the summer; and used his body heat to warm his parents' bed during winter.

The prefect Lau Wu praised him and exclaimed that since Wong could perform XIAO at such a young age, his accomplishment would be immeasurable when he became old.

此衣服之不可不調理者也

Here thus have been described reasons why parents' clothing must be attended carefully by offspring.

(三) 曰起居

為人子者 必需時時關注 凡江湖風浪 危橋險岸 雨雪霜霧 清晨黑夜
不可令父母輕往

3) Daily Living

As offspring of our parents, we must always be concerned for our parents. If conditions are risky, or dangerous, or there is rain, snow, or frost, or it is too early in the morning or too late at night, we should not let our parents go out.

喪祭鬥訟 憂愁及勞心費力之事 不可令父母去行

If circumstances require arrangements for mourning, suing for justice, or dealing with any other matter that can cause parents worry or exhaust their minds and energies, we must not let our parents burden themselves with such things.

若為喜慶安逸快樂之事 則多勸行之

父母之所喜者 如念佛談禪 招飲閒遊之類 則亦多勸為之

If a joyous, peaceful and comfortable occasion comes, we must encourage our parents to participate.

If parents are interested at religion, zen, feasting with friends, or light travel, we should encourage them to enjoy such activity more often.

其行住坐臥 必需顧料扶持 使父母安閒自在 快活度日 即為人子盡心之處

Parents' travel, lodging, and rest or sleep must be our concern and be arranged so that they can pass their time comfortably and happily. Consider thus how offspring do their utmost in care and piety toward their parents.

至於美宮室 則令父母居之 美器物 則令父母用之
凡父母之所好者 則張羅以致之 父母所惡者 則自受而用之

We must also arrange the interior of our parents' house for them to live and provide attractive possessions for them to use.

For things that our parents like, we make our effort to get it for them. For things that our parents dislike, we keep it for ourselves.

此起居之不得不調理者也

Here thus have been described why parent's daily life must be attended to carefully.

(四) 曰疾病

父母年老氣衰 容易受病 病則加意調攝 小心奉侍 左右相隨 不可稍離時刻
飲食藥餌 親自為之 不可委諸奴婢

4) Sickness

When parents are old and become weak, they can get sick easily. We must care for them and comfort them and not leave them alone even momentarily. When serving meals or medicine to parents, we must do it ourselves and not rely on servants.

昔漢文帝母后有病 湯藥必親嘗之 何況士庶之賤耶

Long ago, Wen De was an emperor of Han Dynasty. When his mother was ill, Wen De always tasted soup or herb medicine to make sure that it was suitable for his mother to drink. How much are we, mere common people, as compared to an emperor!

父母在病中 有污床褥 為子者 必勤勤拭換 不可稍有嫌惡之心
試思彼在懷抱時 便溺糞污 父母何曾嫌惡耶

If parents are sick and cannot help but make their bed and blanket dirty, then as offspring, we should change the bed often for them without any feelings of resentment or disgust.

Let us at such difficult times recall when we ourselves were embraced in our parents' arms, they never entertained any feeling of revulsion at our own defecation.

昔黔婁為親嘗糞 人皆以孝稱之 何況拭換之勞 尤為易易乎

A long time ago, lived a person named Kim Lau who tasted his sick father's stool¹ and everyone applauded this act as an act of XIAO. Thus, the changing of our parents' clothes or blankets is really an easy thing to do.

Note¹: Tasting stool is an ancient Chinese medical method to determine how seriously ill a person is with diarrhea. If the stool tastes bitter, the sickness is less serious; if sweet, the diarrhea indicates quite serious illness.

古有因父母之病 衣不解帶 食不甘味者

In olden times, when parents were sick, their offspring slept fully clothed lest their parents needed them and also lost their sense of taste when eating.

噫 彼亦人子也 我亦人子也 彼能是而我豈不能是乎

Consider this carefully: those people were someone's offspring; we are also someone's offspring. If they could do XIAO, why have we the least reason that we cannot?

此疾病之不得不調理者也

Here thus have been described the reasons why parents' sickness must be attended with utmost care.

上列四端 如調理飲食 所以報乳哺之恩也

調理衣服 所以報襁褓之恩也

調理起居 所以報提攜顧復之恩也

調理疾病 所以報痘麻醫救之恩也

Summarizing the reasons for our duties to the above four categories, we give attention to parents' diet by reason of repaying our parents' kindness for nursing us.

We give attention to parents' clothing by reason of repaying our parents' kindness in clothing us in our own infancy.

We give attention to parents' daily living by reason of repaying our parents' kindness in all ways of our upbringing.

We give attention to parents' sickness by reason of repaying our parents' kindness when they cared for our sicknesses.

父母種之於前 而獲之於後 子女受之於前 而還之於後

投桃報李 友誼且然 何況父母非朋友之比耶

養身之大略如此

Parents have sown the seeds early and they reap the fruit later; offspring have received the kindness earlier and repay in gratitude later.

Even in a common friendship, we return a plum if someone has given us a peach; moreover, our parents are so much more to us than any friend.

All of what has been said only approximates what "attending to our parents' bodies" means.

何謂安父母之心 蓋父母之心 莫不欲其子之為善人 行善事
大而揚名顯親 小而安分樂業

What is in the hearts of parents? In general, parents want their children to be kind and do graceful things. The parents' greatest hope and desire is that their children be prominent and bring honor to their clan. At the very least, they hope their children will conduct themselves and find fulfillment in their roles and occupations.

若其子越理犯法 惹禍招災 失業廢時 斬宗絕嗣 固非父母之願 而必有所不安也

If children break the law, cause misfortune, lose their livelihood, or dissipate their time and dishonor their clan, the parents are certain to be distressed and become anxious.

孟子云 世俗所謂不孝者五

Mencius said, "There are five kinds of commonly recognized un-XIAO behaviors."

惰其四肢 不顧父母之養 一不孝也

博奕好飲酒 不顧父母之養 二不孝也

好貨財私妻子 不顧父母之養 三不孝也

徇耳目之欲 以為父母戮 四不孝也

好勇鬥狠 以危父母 五不孝也

Laziness, which causes people to have no intention of taking care of their parents, is the first kind of un-XIAO.

Gambling and drinking, which cause people to have no intention of taking care of their parents, is the second kind of un-XIAO.

Greed for money and favoritism to spouse, which cause people to have no intention of taking care of parents, is the third kind of un-XIAO.

Indulging in the desires of ears and eyes, which causes insult to parents, is the fourth kind of un-XIAO.

Rashness and vice which endangers the parents is the fifth kind of un-XIAO.

此五者皆非父母之所安也

These five kinds of un-XIAO heap distress upon one's parents.

趙氏云 不孝有三

阿意曲從 陷親不義 一也

家貧親老 不為祿仕 二也

不娶無子 絕先祖祀 三也

三者之中 無後為大

Scholar Dziu said that there are three un-XIAO's.

Acquiescing in a parents' vicious idea and letting them be unrighteous is the first one;

Living in poverty without any intention of working, at a time when elderly parents are living at home, is the second;

Not getting married, which portends childlessness and jeopardizes continuation of the clan, is the third.

Among these three, the discontinuation of the family is the most gravely serious un-XIAO.

中庸引詩之言曰 妻子好合 如鼓瑟琴 兄弟既翕 和樂且耽
子曰 父母其順矣乎

The book of Zhong Yong, quoting from the book of Poetry, affirms, "When a couple live together in harmony like that of a melody from musical instruments, and the brothers and sisters grow up together harmoniously, the ultimate in family happiness is at hand."

Confucius said of such harmonious children, "Their parents most certainly experience contentment."

由此觀之 妻子不和 則父母之心不安 兄弟不睦 則父母之心亦不安
推而至於立身行己 交朋處世 凡有違於廿字者 皆非父母之所安 而不得謂為孝也 孝豈易言哉

Considering the above, if a couple is not in accord, the parents' hearts become uneasy. If brothers and sisters are not in harmony, parents' hearts cannot be but disturbed.

Furthermore, in regard to our own behavior and comportment, making of friends and dealing with worldly matters: when we conduct these unworthily in the very shadow of "Twenty Characters", it disconcerts and brings discomfort to our parents. This is anything but XIAO. XIAO, it may be said most truly, is not an easy word to utter disingenuously.

是故父母有爭 則細意疏解 父母有過 則從容勸諫

When parents argue, we should carefully counsel them; if they are wrong, we should calmly and respectfully admonish them.

凡虧體辱親之事 敬畏而不敢為 凡揚名顯親之事 勇行而不敢怠

If things that we may do can harm our bodies or insult our parents, we should avoid doing them. If things that we may do can bring us fame and bring honor to our parents, we should endeavor to pursue such things energetically.

即如父母既沒 亦當曲體生前之意 而不敢稍有違背
豈獨莽埋祭祀宗廟墳墓之不可苟且從事哉

Even if our parents are deceased, we should still try to live lives of propriety the way that our parents would want, and we must in no event do dishonor to their wishes.

As to the proprieties of burial, memorial ceremony, ancestral temple observance and paying

respects at the grave site, we must be diligent in undertaking and bring to completion all such arrangements.

蓋一生所作所為 事事可問我心 即事事可合父母之心
事事可合父母之心 即事事可合天地之心

Basically, whatever we may do with our lives, if we can feel no qualms upon self-examination, we have complied with our parents' wishes.
If so, then it also means that the way we are living is in harmony with the hearts of Heaven and Earth.

父即天 母即地 人豈有二天地哉

Father is the Heaven and mother is the Earth. Mankind thus has really the Heaven and Earth in twin!

安心之大略又如此

These, basically, are the synopsis of how to assurance our parents' hearts.

近有一種論說 謂父慈則子孝 父不慈則子可不孝
且前親後晚 父母之待子不同 則子之待父母者亦異
噫 此種邪說 陷人不小

Recently, an argument has been proposed that parents are merciful to their children, their children will concomitantly behave in the manner of XIAO; and if the parents are not, their children will conversely behave with un-XIAO. Furthermore, it is now supposed, if the parents accord their different children different ways of parental treatment, their children will necessarily behave with un-XIAO.

Alas, these wicked theories in all their variations profoundly deceive all too many people.

夫繼母養母庶母 皆母也 父母苟有偏愛 為子者 尤宜竭誠相敬 使之有所感悟

The step-mother, foster-mother or mother of concubines are all mothers of their own children as well. They may understandably love their own children with motherly bias. However, if we are otherwise-than-biological children of them, we still have the obligation to show respect to them with utmost sincerity in order for them to come to recognize through their own conscience.

昔瞽瞍愛象而欲殺舜 舜盡事親之道 而瞽瞍底豫 此明證也

A long time ago, Gu Sau loved his second wife's son, Dzoen, and continually desired to kill his first wife's son, Soen¹. However, Soen thoroughgoingly treated his parents with utmost respect. Eventually, Gu Sau came to love Soen dearly. This was a shining example.

Note¹: Soen was a famous emperor in Chinese history. His governance set a high standard for all Chinese dynasties.

又有閔子騫者 其母早喪 繼母垢之 衣以蘆花 繼母所生二子 皆衣棉絮
父知之 欲出繼母 子騫泣曰 母在一子寒 母去三子單
父從之 母聞悔改 此又明證也

Another example was Man Tze-Hin¹ who was motherless when young. His step-mother hated Man and gave him coarse clothes to wear in the cold of winter. Meanwhile, by contrast, the sons of the step-mother herself were dressed in long padded cotton robes. Man's father discovered the discrimination and tried to expel his wife. However, Man cried to his father and begged, "If she remains, I am the only one to suffer the cold; if she goes, your three sons will be exposed to the severe weather!" Man's father was reluctantly persuaded by his advice. The step-mother, indeed, also heard the heartfelt words, and she was thereupon deeply moved and repented of her hardness of heart toward Man.

This example provides further clear evidence of the importance of XIAO.

Note¹: Man, who was a student of Confucius, was famous for his outstandingly exemplary moral conduct.

斯二人者 一則父不慈 一則母不慈 而二人竟有以感悟之 宜夫孔子以孝稱之也

Considering the above two narratives, one depicts a father's unmercifulness and the other one tells of an arbitrarily unkind mother. But, somehow, both of these parents were deeply touched in their hearts and realized the error of their ways. In the end, these two children both were lauded by Confucius himself as sons of XIAO.

譚子有言 感父之慈 非孝也 喜君之寵 非忠也
感始於不感 喜始於不喜 喜感在心 忠孝何在

Scholar Tam¹ wrote these words, "One who merely basks in his father's mercifulness does not have XIAO; one who merely enjoys his lord's favoritism to himself is not to be thought loyal by that alone."

The principle behind the words is that the action of FEELING comes after not-feeling; the condition of LIKING comes after dis-liking. If our hearts always dwell on how much we feel and like, true XIAO and loyalty will never predominate in us.

Note¹: Scholar Tam was a famous Taoist in Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907).

細玩斯言 是知慈不慈在親 孝不孝在我 不可以彼而易此也

Carefully contemplating those words, we realize that whether parents should be merciful to us depends solely upon our parents; whether we respect our parents with XIAO depends solely upon us. We cannot use XIAO as a bargaining chip as if to buy parents' mercifulness.

程子曰 父雖不慈 子不可不孝

斯言得之矣

Scholar Ching said, "Parents may not be merciful, but their offspring must not be un-XIAO." These words are truly those of a person who has attained to the state of XIAO.

嘗聞人惟一孝字 足以感天地鬼神

I have heard that a person who has achieved XIAO as a singular virtue has such inward power of personal being as to influence the Heaven and Earth and Deities themselves.

以吾思之 理有固然者 何也

My analysis altogether expounds a most-reasoned reasoning. How?

天地即父母也 鬼神即天地之功用 造化之主宰也
以孝相感 兩情相得 安得不如響斯應乎

Heaven and Earth resemble parents. Deities, who are the executants of the very functioning of Heaven and Earth, are the lords of creating and nourishing everything within the universe. If we use XIAO to engender mutual solidary feeling and affection between us and Heaven, Earth and Deities, our feelings surely find, in turn, a response from them like resounding echoes.

昔王祥性孝 繼母朱氏有疾 欲食生魚 天寒冰凍 祥解衣 將剖冰求之 冰忽自解 雙鯉躍出 持之而歸 母又思黃雀炙 復有雀數十 飛入其幕 復以供母

A long time ago, Wong Chen¹ was XIAO. In the wintertime, when his step-mother was ill, she needed to eat live fish. Wong went to a nearby frozen ice pond. In vain, he took off all his clothes and tried to use his body heat to melt the ice, hoping to catch fish through the ice hole his body might make. Suddenly, the ice broke into a hole elsewhere by itself and two fish jumped out to him. He then brought the fish home for his stepmother. Another time, his step-mother craved to have birds for a meal. Once again, nature was touched, and a couple of dozen birds astonishingly flew into the house to be caught by Wong.

Note¹: Wong Chen, who was an imperial scholar and a royal family teacher in Jin Dynasty (BC 265-420), was extremely XIAO. When he was young, his stepmother always slandered him and caused his father to distance away from him. However, Wong always respected his parents.

夫魚鳥何知 而皆自來 以遂其孝 非天地佑之 鬼神助之耶

The fish and the birds, having no sense of their own, yet came to Wong and Wong's house by themselves in fulfillment of Wong's way of being XIAO. Weren't those instances a correspondence from Heaven and Earth and an assistance from Deities?

明時楊黼訪謁無際大士 途遇一僧 曰 汝見無際 不如見活佛
黼曰 活佛何在 僧曰 汝但歸見披襟倒屣者即是

遂歸 暮夜叩門 母聞披襟倒屣出戶 黼乃一見感悟 自是竭力孝養

In the Ming Dynasty (AD 1368-1644), a person named Yong Fu sought the famous monk named Boundless, to help him in his sorrow, even though Yong had never seen Boundless before. One day, while traveling to look for Boundless, he met a monk who told Yong, "Looking for the monk Boundless is less excellent than finding the 'living Buddha'."

Yong asked, "Where is the 'living Buddha'?" The monk then replied, "Go back to where you have come from. The person who is covered with a blanket and wears a pair of slippers in reverse is the one."

Yong returned. He arrived home at night and knocked at his door. When his mother heard that it was her long gone son, she jumped out of her bed eagerly and simply grasped a blanket to cover her head down to her back. She was so happy that in her haste she happened to put on her slippers in reverse and ran to the door. As soon as Yong saw his mother, he became enlightened and from then on, he did his utmost to comport himself with XIAO toward his parents.

世之人往往向遠方求佛 殊不知佛即在於堂上

Today, people often travel far to seek 'Buddha'. However, they don't realize that the 'Buddha' is in their very own homes.

吾謂人能竭誠盡孝 念念不忘 佛即在於心頭也

非獨佛在心頭 即天地鬼神亦皆在於吾心矣

If we can exert our best efforts for XIAO and continually be mindful to do so, the 'Buddha' is essentially and truly living in our hearts.

And not only is the 'Buddha', but even all Heaven, Earth and Deities are there within our hearts.

彼以父母為造人機械 不能養其身 安其心 以盡人子之道者 其思之 熟其思之

To you people who, in grave error, think that parents are mere human reproductive entities, and who blindly neglect to support the needs of your parents' bodies and assuage the anguish of their hearts as would comport with XIAO: I most strongly abjure you, each of you, to ponder this character XIAO most carefully.