

From Criticism to Revision

A public correction model for a working translation

Series: A Corrigible Kierkegaard, Essay 7 **Status:** public scholarly working paper; open for correction **Version:** 0.4, 20 August 2026

Abstract

A translation is not made corrigible by announcing that corrections are welcome. It needs a practical way to receive an objection, reproduce the issue, assess its evidence, record a decision, revise the relevant files, and preserve the former wording. This essay proposes such a model for the present AI-assisted translation of Kierkegaard's *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger*. Corrections are classified by what they concern—source completeness, grammar and lexicon, conceptual or rhetorical distortion, defensible alternatives, style, and provenance or citation—rather than by the status of the person making them. Public criticism may be submitted directly or linked from a scholarly article, blog, review, forum, or Reddit post. Venue does not determine validity, although informal discussion is not treated as philological evidence until its claims are tested. The model distinguishes acknowledgement from agreement, gives accepted and rejected objections a visible rationale, and requires versioned correction without erasing the superseded text. It also recognises limits: no response timetable can be guaranteed, no scholar is obliged to contribute unpaid review, and public openness does not amount to peer review. The aim is not to pre-empt hostility but to turn answerable criticism into a durable improvement.

Keywords: translation criticism; correction policy; Kierkegaard; versioning; open review; scholarly disagreement

1. Correction is an editorial practice

“Open to correction” is easy to write and difficult to honour. The phrase may mean no more than that an author accepts fallibility in principle. A useful correction policy must specify what happens when someone points to a particular Danish word, omitted clause, misleading English implication, unsupported citation, or undisclosed limitation.

The need is especially clear in the present project. Its apparatus has already exposed omitted source openings, incomplete close layers, and an over-broad default for *Elskov*. These were not superficial typographical matters. They affected completeness and interpretation. A method that records such failures only in private cannot ask a public reader to trust its corrigibility.

The project editor instigated this essay series partly for that reason. The aim was to place the method and disputed decisions where scholars and interested readers could engage with them without joining or endorsing the project. The editor also recognised that AI-assisted literary translation may meet principled as well as textual objection. A correction system must be able to hear both while distinguishing what kind of answer each requires.

2. What counts as a correction?

Not every disagreement establishes an error. Translation often presents alternatives that distribute gains and losses differently. A public register should therefore classify an objection before deciding it.

Class A: source and completeness

Examples include an omitted Danish sentence, a miscopied word, a wrong SKS location, a truncated quotation, or a source unit placed in the wrong chapter. These are ordinarily determinate and high priority because every interpretive layer depends upon the source object.

Class B: grammar and lexicon

These objections concern morphology, syntax, historical meaning, collocation, definite forms, pronoun reference, or the relation between recurring words. Piety's criticism of *Christenhed/Christendom*, *Stavningen*, *er det*, and *Mennesker* belongs primarily here.^[1]

Some Class B objections are decisive; others reveal genuine ambiguity. The response should state which.

Class C: conceptual or rhetorical distortion

A sentence may be grammatically possible yet weaken the discourse's argument, biblical echo, irony, repetition, direct address, or image. Replacing a repeated Kierkegaardian term with elegant synonyms may belong here if the recurrence performs conceptual work.

Class D: defensible alternative

The critic proposes a rendering that may be as good as or better than the current one, but the present text is not demonstrably wrong. These objections should not be dismissed. They can lead to a revised choice, a note, or an "open" status where the alternatives disclose different features.

Class E: style and reader effect

The objection concerns cadence, stiffness, datedness, over-explanation, unnecessary literalism, excessive smoothing, or a tone inappropriate to the passage. Style is not a merely decorative class. As Hannay and Piety in different ways suggest, Kierkegaard's surface liveliness and stylistic variation are part of what fidelity must address.^[2]

Class F: evidence, provenance, or disclosure

Examples include an inaccurate citation, an inaccessible source, a claim stronger than the evidence, unclear AI-use language, omitted contributor information, or a failure to distinguish public discussion from scholarly evidence.

This class is especially important because a text can be linguistically sound while its presentation misleads about review, authorship, or certainty.

3. Who may raise an objection?

Anyone may identify a problem. Expertise affects the weight and context of evidence, but it should not function as a gate before the claim is read.

A Danish scholar may bring historical and linguistic knowledge the project lacks. A Kierkegaard specialist may recognise an echo across the authorship. A biblical scholar may identify a scriptural cadence. A literary translator may hear a distortion of voice. A careful general reader may notice that a paragraph is missing or that an English sentence makes no sense.

Conversely, academic status does not make an unsupported assertion decisive. The proper response is neither credential-blindness nor credential-worship. It is to consider the claim, the evidence offered, and the limits of the project's ability to adjudicate it.

An objector need not correspond privately. A critique published in an article, review, blog, personal site, forum, or Reddit thread may be linked into the register. Recording the link does not imply that the critic has collaborated with, approved, or even wished to assist the project. Public words should be represented accurately and in context.

4. The correction cycle

The proposed cycle has seven stages.

4.1 Intake

Record the date received, stable link or supplied text, objector's stated name if public, essay or chapter version, source location, disputed wording, proposed correction if any, and objection class. Do not require a critic to fill out a form before a clear public objection can be considered.

4.2 Acknowledgement

Mark the item as received. Acknowledgement means only that the objection has been recorded. It does not imply agreement, endorsement, or a promised response date.

4.3 Reproduction

Confirm that the cited wording and version exist. Reopen the Danish source and enough context to understand the claim. If the objection depends on a dictionary, article, commentary, biblical text, or historical parallel, inspect that evidence where access permits.

If the issue cannot be reproduced, say why: the quoted wording may belong to a superseded version, the link may be inaccessible, or the source location may be wrong. A good-faith attempt should precede dismissal.

4.4 Assessment

State the strongest form of the objection before answering it. Ask:

- Is the Danish source complete and correctly transcribed?
- What grammar and historical usage constrain the reading?
- What happens in the surrounding paragraph and across recurrences?
- Does the English add, omit, narrow, or resolve something?
- Is the disputed feature conceptually or rhetorically active?
- Is the critic identifying an error, a stronger alternative, or a preference?
- What evidence would change the current judgement?

Where the project lacks competence or access to decide, the status should remain “open” rather than being forced into acceptance or rejection.

4.5 Decision

Use one of five outcomes:

Outcome	Meaning
Accepted	The current text or claim is wrong and will be corrected
Accepted in part	The objection identifies a real problem, but the proposed remedy is not wholly adopted
Alternative recorded	The present text remains defensible, but the alternative deserves visible preservation
Open	Available evidence or competence does not yet settle the issue
Not accepted	The current text is retained, with a stated reason

“Not accepted” should never mean “ignored.” A short evidence-based rationale permits the critic and later readers to see what was decided.

4.6 Revision

When an objection is accepted, update every affected layer: readable text, close text, facing-page table, glossary, landmark register, chapter essay, series essay, and cross-chapter issues where relevant. A lexical decision may recur far beyond the sentence first criticised.

Assign a new version and add a correction-history entry. Preserve the superseded file. Do not silently rewrite a public paper in place when the change affects meaning.

4.7 Public response

Publish the outcome near the object criticised or in a linked correction ledger. Credit the objector if they used a public name and attribution is appropriate; respect an explicit request for anonymity. Quote only what is necessary and link to the original public critique where possible.

The response should thank the person for the specific contribution without implying agreement beyond the accepted point. If the objection is not accepted, describe the disagreement without speculating about motive.

5. An example: from Piety's criticism to local revision

Piety's essay supplies a useful model because it combines stylistic preference with local correction. Applying her four tests to the present translation produced a mixed but mostly favourable result.^[3]

- The current text preserves *Christenhed/Christendom* as “Christendom/Christianity.”
- It treats *Stavningen* generically as “spelling.”
- It attaches “is not to love” to unconditional certainty of being loved.
- It renders *Mennesker* as “people,” not “men.”

The review nevertheless found two improvements. “Tears words apart into pieces” compresses the spelling image, while “to stand unconditionally certain” is stiffer than necessary and anticipates “equal” from the following sentence. The proposed alternatives are closer and clearer.

This is the kind of result the correction system should make possible. A critique written about other translations generated definite tests; the present text survived the primary errors but did not emerge untouched. The response is neither wholesale vindication nor wholesale rejection.

6. An example: correcting the project's own default

Essay 4 on *Elskov* presents a more substantial correction.^[4] The project charter originally used “erotic love” as a default. Review of historical dictionary evidence, scholarship, and the local corpus suggested that the English phrase can be too narrow and too sexualised as a routine rendering. The essay recommends suspending the default and using context-sensitive alternatives.

This should be entered as:

- **Class:** B/C, lexicon and conceptual framing;
- **Outcome:** accepted at the policy level;
- **Affected materials:** charter, glossary, all occurrences of *Elskov*, chapter introductions, and essays;
- **Status:** implementation pending passage-by-passage review;
- **Limitation:** no Danish specialist has yet reviewed the revised policy.

The last two lines prevent a methodological essay from being mistaken for a completed correction of the translation.

7. Disagreement, hostility, and professional concern

The editor initially hoped that academically serious essays might pre-empt some hostility towards an AI-assisted translation. The hope is understandable, but “pre-emption” is not the best public aim. Some opposition concerns textual quality; some concerns labour, consent, compensation, attribution, professional displacement, or cultural standardisation. A good translation choice cannot by itself answer those objections.

The correction policy should therefore distinguish:

1. **Answerable textual claims**, which can be tested against source and evidence;
2. **Ethical or professional arguments**, which deserve engagement on their own terms;
3. **General negative judgements**, which may be recorded as reception but contain no claim to adjudicate;
4. **Abusive or harassing content**, which need not be reproduced or amplified.

Modesty does not require accepting every accusation. It requires representing serious criticism accurately, answering what evidence permits, and acknowledging what the project cannot settle.

Professional translators are not an unpaid review panel. An open invitation must not imply an obligation to improve the project. If a scholar or translator offers a correction publicly, the project may respond; it should not convert that act into claimed participation without permission.

8. Reddit as a correction venue

Reddit is relevant in two different ways.

First, discussions in r/kierkegaard record readers' practical experience of translations: clarity, literalness, edition choice, terminology, and frustration with competing versions. Secondly, r/TranslationStudies records professional concern about AI, post-editing, pay, voice, and disclosure.^[5]

Neither community should be mined for quotations merely to create an appearance of public consultation. If a post raises a specific claim relevant to the project, the claim can be summarised, linked, and independently tested. Usernames should not be transformed into scholarly authorities or contributors without their involvement.

A correction discovered on Reddit receives the same initial questions as one discovered in a journal: what exactly is claimed, what evidence supports it, and can the issue be reproduced? The answers, not the platform, determine the outcome. The source label should nevertheless remain "informal public discussion" unless scholarly support is supplied.

9. Versioning and the public record

The project should use semantic meaning rather than software convention to decide when a version changes:

- typographical and link repairs may increment a minor correction note;
- wording that changes a claim, translation, limitation, or contribution statement requires a new visible version;
- a substantial reconception of an essay requires a new major draft;
- superseded versions remain accessible in an archive unless legal or privacy reasons require removal.

Every active paper should show its version, date, status, correction history, and link to the correction protocol. The series index should distinguish active, superseded, incomplete, and proposed items.

The public ledger should contain enough information to understand the change without requiring access to internal working files. Internal notes may preserve more process detail; they should not be cited as public evidence unless made available.

10. What silence means

Nothing follows from a lack of public response. It does not mean that scholars have read the work, that no errors exist, or that the project has passed informal peer review. Open publication offers an opportunity for criticism, not a guarantee that attention or expertise will arrive.

Similarly, the project cannot promise immediate replies. The protocol should mark an item as received, under assessment, awaiting evidence, decided, or implemented. It should avoid deadlines it lacks the resources to keep.

These limits make the invitation more honest. They also protect critics from being represented as validators through silence.

Limitations

The proposed correction process has not yet been tested with external submissions. It may prove too elaborate for minor matters or insufficient for large disputes. The project has no standing editorial board and cannot provide independent adjudication where the editor and drafter share an interest in defending the text.

Where a disagreement cannot be responsibly resolved, the register should preserve the evidence and mark it open. Public transparency reduces but does not eliminate the asymmetry between a project controlling its own files and a critic responding from outside.

Conclusion

Correction becomes credible when it leaves a trace: objection, evidence, decision, changed text, and preserved former wording. The proposed model does not turn public commentary into peer review, nor does it guarantee that specialists will participate. It gives any interested reader a definite object to contest and gives the project a discipline for responding.

The proper aim is not to pre-empt hostility. It is to make justified criticism consequential. If a small grammatical point changes the argument, the translation should change. If a stylistic alternative is better, it should be considered. If the evidence remains divided, the disagreement should remain visible. That is the practical meaning of a working translation offered under correction.

Contribution and AI-use statement

The project editor and series instigator requested a public mechanism through which scholars and other readers could engage with the essays without formal participation in the project. The editor set the expectation of modest tone and retained final editorial authority. OpenAI Codex assisted with analysis of the project's revision history, source and policy research, classification design, drafting, and bibliographic checking. Codex is not an author. Any human signatory must review, approve, and accept responsibility for a published version.

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Notes

[1] M. G. Piety, "Some Praise for the Hongs as Translators," *Piety on Kierkegaard*, 12 May 2026, <https://pietyonkierkegaard.com/2026/05/12/some-praise-for-the-hongs-as-translators/>.

[2] Alastair Hannay, "Translating Kierkegaard," in *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*, ed. John Lippitt and George Pattison (Oxford University Press, 2013), 385-401, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199601301.013.0021>; Piety, "Some Praise."

[3] "When Grammar Becomes Interpretation".

[4] "What Kind of Love Is *Elskov*?".

[5] Illustrative public discussions: [r/kierkegaard](#), [r/kierkegaard](#), [r/TranslationStudies](#), and [r/TranslationStudies](#). These are treated as informal reception evidence.

Correction history

- **0.4 - 20 August 2026:** refreshed the active Essay 3 and Essay 4 cross-references after the final modest-tone review.
- **0.3 - 20 August 2026:** updated the active Essay 3 cross-reference.
- **0.2 - 20 August 2026:** updated the active Essay 4 cross-reference.
- **0.1 - 19 August 2026:** first complete public-working-paper draft.