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A Philosophical Perspective on the Türkiye Century Education Model in a Mystical and Phenomenological Context

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Abstract

Modernity's objectifying dominance, which alienates humans from their "life-world" (Lebenswelt), has desouled education, turning knowledge into an "unanchored bundle of load" that remains outside of consciousness. This study examines the "Personality Construction" objective and the "Virtue-Value-Action" cycle of the Türkiye Century Education Model (TCEM) against this mechanical structure on a phenomenological and mystical ground. As a methodological framework, Edmund Husserl's "epoché" (bracketing) method—which suspends dogmatic assumptions—and Mehmet Bayrakdar's concept of "transition from habit to consciousness" serve as the foundation. This philosophical ground is synthesized with Yunus Emre's search for truth symbolized by "knowing oneself," Mevlânâ's "Perfect Human" (İnsan-ı Kâmil) ideal that transforms theoretical knowledge (*kal*) into lived experience (*hâl*), and the Compass Metaphor. The analysis reveals that TCEM's search for ontological, epistemological, and axiological integrity overlaps with the mystical "return to the essence," positioning action (*praxis*) as the manifestation of internal consciousness. However, TCEM, being an institutional framework rather than a philosophical critique, fails to fully reflect the metaphysical integrity present in these thinkers, exhibiting an eclectic character. Crucially, the insufficient emphasis on Nurettin Topçu's "Teacher" (*Muallim*) ideal—who shapes young souls on an anvil of meaning as the primary constituting subject of education—stands out as a fundamental deficiency. Ultimately, the article emphasizes that for TCEM to transcend technical curriculum reform and become an ontological resurrection, it requires the integration of an existential teacher understanding capable of guiding knowledge into consciousness and morality into action.

Keywords: Türkiye Century Education Model; phenomenology; personality construction; transition from habit to consciousness; virtue–value–action cycle; Nurettin Topçu.

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1. Introduction

In the post-modernity era, human beings have been dragged into a crisis of forgetting the truth of existence and their own ontological roots. Discussing the human being in modern philosophy by reducing them merely to an abstract concept and cognitive faculties has condemned them to an "inauthentic" existence in the world and alienation from their own truth (Ünal, 2020b, p. 33). One of the areas where this ontological crisis manifests most clearly has been educational systems. As Edmund Husserl diagnosed in his phenomenological critiques, the detachment of human beings from the "life-world" (Lebenswelt)—the very ground where they produce their own meanings and values—by transforming the world into a purely mathematical and objective structure, has led to the desouling of science and education (Husserl, 2003, p. 22).

In Turkish educational philosophy, this situation is severely criticized by Nurettin Topçu. According to Topçu, in the modern era where technique is deified, the school, devoid of the love of truth and reduced merely to a laboratory or workshop, has transformed into a center of alienation that virtually expels the human being from the school. Modern education depersonalizes the human being by failing to internalize knowledge into the student's self and will, instead turning it into an 'unanchored bundle of load' outside of consciousness. According to Topçu, the way out of this crisis is possible only by removing knowledge from being a theoretical heap (object) remaining in the memory, and transforming it into a moral will and a 'state' (*hâl*) that enables personality construction (Topçu, 1997, p. 46).

The purpose of this study is to use the idea of "conceptualizing the consciousness of the phenomenon-essence of things in one's own consciousness" (Bayrakdar, 1987, p. 3), proposed by Mehmet Bayrakdar in his book *İbadet Fenomenolojisi* (Phenomenology of Islamic Worship), as a methodological ground and a way out against the said objectifying dominance of modernity over human beings. This phenomenological context is synthesized with Yunus Emre's understanding of wisdom (marifet), which directly links knowing oneself (i.e., one's own truth) to the truth of existence, and Mevlânâ's ideal of the "Perfect Human" (İnsan-ı Kâmil), who is believed to be able to embrace the truth by stripping away all worldly veils and rote learnings.

Based on this theoretical framework, the "Ontological and Epistemological Integrity" and multi-dimensional development goals centered by the Türkiye Century Education Model (TCEM), which represents a new paradigm in our education system, will be examined. This study will analyze how the "Virtue-Value-Action" cycle, which forms the heart of the Model and requires moral values to manifest in actions, is not a dry instruction of skills but rather an existential manifestation and a process of national "personality construction" (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 4).

2. Modernity's Crisis and the Phenomenological Return to the Essence

Since the 17th century, when the grand narrative of modern thought claiming to reveal the truth of everything with absolute certainty became visible, the connection of human beings with their own roots has grown significantly weaker, in contrast to humanity's vast technical progress. Indeed, within modern thought's mathematical and mechanical conception of the universe, the increasingly objectified human being is alienated from their own roots and destination. As Edmund Husserl, one of the foremost thinkers to recognize and expose this crisis early on, diagnosed in his work *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, modern science and rationality have "naturalized" consciousness and ideals, thereby alienating human beings from the "life-world" (Lebenswelt), which is the actual ground where meaning and values are produced (Husserl, 1994, p. 78). Husserl's critique of this "objectivism"—wherein the human being is reduced to a purely physical fact and causality, a diagnosis he made within the European society he lived in—presents a strong philosophical intersection with Nurettin Topçu's critique regarding the erasure of personality and the reduction of the soul to a cog in a mechanical system within the Turkish education system and philosophy in the last century. According to Topçu, the modern school, which is devoid of the love of truth and deifies only technique and utility, fails to internalize knowledge into the student's self, turning it into an "unanchored bundle of load" outside of consciousness, thus alienating the individual from their own truth and personality (Topçu, 1997, p. 11).

In the text *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl argues that modern science and rationality have alienated human beings from the "life-world" (Lebenswelt), their actual existential ground, by transforming the world into a purely mathematical and mechanical structure (Husserl, 1994, p. 79). Under the influence of positivist theory, the mechanical model of natural sciences has been extended to all other fields, "naturalizing" consciousness and absolute ideals, and reducing everything to a physical or psychophysical web of causality (Husserl, 2014, p. 13). According to Husserl, this has caused philosophy and science to fall into a vortex of superficial "objectivism"; with the loss of spiritual (soulful) goals, the existential crisis of European humanity erupted (Husserl, 1994, p. 80). Husserl believes that human beings

have been torn away from the world they live in. Both before and after Husserl, reducing the human being to a theoretical ground—transforming them from a state of becoming into a mere definition—has been criticized by many philosophers, especially existentialists. At this juncture, Husserl raises his objection by expressing a point that can be seen as an indispensable part of this critique: how the life-world, to which the living human being is originally connected by producing emotions, values, and meaning, has turned into a self-enclosed, soulless mechanism through the artificial promise of objective truth.

Husserl's critique of the positivist theory—which constitutes the spirit of modern science—for objectifying human beings and the life-world they interact with in order to exist, stands in an ontological overlap with the "loss of personality" thesis that Nurettin Topçu directs at modern education in his work *Türkiye'nin Maarif Davası*. Topçu states that modern education has broken away from the love of truth and oriented itself solely toward technical and pragmatist interests, turning the school into merely a laboratory or workshop, thereby "expelling the human being from the school" (Topçu, 1997, p. 134). What Husserl calls the "naturalization of ideals", Topçu opposes as the "deification of technique" and the human being "becoming a slave of the machine". Topçu's view is that rote knowledge that is not internalized and transformed into consciousness remains in the student's mind as an unconscious "unanchored bundle of load". In Topçu's words, "a lesson taken at school is either a conception, assigned to the imagination; or a skill, assigned to the hand; or a will, added to our power; or a love, filled in the heart" (Topçu, 1997, p. 46). As can be seen, both thinkers agree that severing knowledge from the human being's spiritual existence and world of meaning, and converting it into mechanical tool, leads to the individual's alienation (depersonalization) from their own essence and truth.

It is evident how the situation Husserl describes as the crisis of European humanity manifested at a later date as a loss of identity in the education system as a result of the Turkish nation's several centuries of crises described by Nurettin Topçu. Based on this similarity in critiques and criticized situations, it would not be an overstatement to suggest that there would be a similarity in their solutions as well. Transcending this situation, which can be called a kind of existential alienation, and transforming education from a mechanical transfer of information (habit) into personality construction (consciousness/state) is only possible through a methodological leap. At this very point, Husserl's phenomenological method, which prescribes "bracketing" (*epoché*) the dogmatic and objectivist assumptions of the natural attitude (Husserl, 2003, p. 38), constitutes a solid philosophical foundation for the epistemological and ontological integrity goals of the *Türkiye Century Education Model* (TCEM) (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 5). Phenomenology's effort to reject mechanical objectification and orient itself toward the "things themselves" and the pure essence perfectly overlaps with TCEM's ideal of transforming knowledge from external rote learning into "wisdom" integrated with moral consciousness and aesthetic action (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 6).

The relationship between Husserl's phenomenological *epoché* (bracketing) method and mystical consciousness is not a philosophical stretch, but a methodological and existential parallelism. By suspending the dogmatic, empirical, and mechanical assumptions of the external world (*natural attitude*), Husserl aims to reach pure consciousness (transcendental ego), which is the unique constituting realm of meaning (Husserl, 2003). In Sufi philosophy, this orientation corresponds to the suspension of the individual's dogmatic illusion (*mâsivâ* perception) that perceives the world and their own ego as independent, absolute entities. Just as Husserl returns to the constituting consciousness by bracketing the phenomenal world, the mystic also parts the veil of external forms and worldly desires to orient toward the true consciousness of existence behind things. In this context, the claim of the *Türkiye Century Education Model* (TCEM) to transition "from knowledge to wisdom" strictly requires this phenomenological bracketing (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 5): only to the extent that the student can suspend the utilitarian and mechanical assumptions of knowledge imposed by modernity (Husserl, 1994, p. 78) can they internalize the phenomenon-essence of things in their own consciousness (Bayrakdar, 1987, p. 3) and transform knowledge into moral action (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 6).

Husserl's phenomenology aims to descend to the hidden 'essence' behind the appearances of things in order to reach the truth. Mehmet Bayrakdar, in his original philosophical essay titled *İslâm İbadet Fenomenolojisi* (Phenomenology of Islamic Worship), defines this situation as the human self making an intuitive leap toward things through 'intentionality' and "conceptualizing the consciousness of the phenomenon-essence of things in one's own consciousness" (Bayrakdar, 1987, p. 3). According to him, in Islamic Sufism, this phenomenological attitude is mirrored in removing religious practices and knowledge from being a mere 'âdet', habit (dry routine) and transforming them into 'şuur', (consciousness). In his view, Islamic Sufis have demonstrated that there can be a way to grasp the very essence of worships by going beyond their external, jurisprudential (*fiqh*) meanings. This path is a

journey toward oneself in order to integrate with the divine consciousness, a path that every human being can walk. Grasping the essence of both the material and spiritual elements of worships by transcending their jurisprudential forms integrates the human being with the divine consciousness (Bayrakdar, 1987, p. 6). According to this understanding, instead of being loaded with any knowledge, attaining consciousness through it—that is, transitioning from habit (*âdet*) to worship practice (*ibâdet*)—means that the human being internalizes that knowledge as a 'state' (*hâl*) and integrates it into every moment of their life. Otherwise, the relationship between knowledge and the human being will turn into a relationship between the carrier and the carried. This implies severing the human being from existence, which could cause them to lose the truth entirely while searching for it.

3. A Phenomenological Leap in Education: Personality Construction and Action on the Axis of the Maarif Model

Following Bayrakdar's footsteps, this process of descending to the phenomenological essence mentioned by Husserl can be conceptualized in Sufism as a transition from the 'kal ilmi' (knowledge based on words and rote learning) to the 'hâl ilmi' (knowledge based on lived experience and inner experience) (Ünal, 2020a, p. 17). The following couplet by the famous Turkish Sufi Yunus Emre is highly explanatory in this regard: "Knowledge is to know knowledge, knowledge is to know oneself; If you do not know yourself, what is the use of reading?" (Tatcı, 2012, p. 144). Yunus Emre connects knowing the truth of existence and God, above all, to knowing oneself. According to Yunus, while schools and madrasas teach only theoretical knowledge, 'ilim' (external knowledge), where only reason and the senses are utilized, it is wisdom, 'marifet' (experiential knowledge), acquired in the school of love that opens the human being's inner eye, enabling them to comprehend the truth of things and transforming their state of being (Bayrakdar, 2021, p. 93). This understanding that the process of acquiring bookish knowledge (kal ilmi), which Yunus describes as barren labor, in madrasas would lead to the truth, is the greatest obstacle to the human being reaching their own truth and the essence of things (Bayrakdar, 2021, p. 95).

The concept of 'şuur' (consciousness/awareness) finding its ground in the philosophy of education radically departs from the purely cognitive or rational definitions of "consciousness" based on the subject-object duality of Cartesian philosophy. As grounded in phenomenological readings, şuur is the process of the human being directly experiencing the phenomenon-essence of things within their own inner consciousness, i.e., the process of 'becoming aware of the essence of things' (Bayrakdar, 1987, p. 3). In Sufi epistemology, this corresponds to the realm of *ilm-i huzûrî* (presential/intuitive knowledge), which stands in contrast to *ilm-i husulî* (acquired knowledge), the process of external knowledge acquisition based on reasoning; it closes the distance between subject and object, giving rise to a direct state of "being". Similarly, the concept of "state" (*hâl*) cannot be reduced to a temporary psychological mood. In Sufi existence, *hâl* means going beyond bookish and oral rote learning (*kal*) so that knowledge becomes integrated into the entire existence of the human being, transforming into a moral existential transformation (becoming) (Bayrakdar, 2021, p. 93). In this aspect, *şuur* and *hâl* imply that rather than the student loading knowledge as an external object (Topçu, 1997, p. 46), they dissolve it within their own ontological integrity, making it a foundational element of their personality.

In Sufi existence, the construction of personality deepens when the human being realizes they are a fallen entity in the world, parts the veils of mechanized habit and form (*şekil*) that surround them, and turns toward their essence. At this point, Mevlânâ's philosophy comes into play. According to Mevlânâ, while the "people of words" (*kal ehli*) attempt to reach the knowledge of truth solely through bookish means, the "people of state" (*hâl ehli*) contemplate the truth through love and experience it directly by living it in their own existence (Ünal, 2020a, p. 63). The human being comprehends the truth not through purely theoretical reflection, but through the active relationships and orientations they establish with the entities in the world. In phenomenological terms, this action transforms into the manifestation of inner intent and consciousness in the external world, rather than remaining an abstract set of rules imposed from the outside. This inner journey means that the individual liberates themselves from the external rote learning imposed on them, thereby achieving an authentic existence—the station of the 'insan-ı kâmil' (Ünal, 2020a, p. 73). In Mevlânâ's philosophy, the transformation of knowledge into character is depicted through the metaphor of churning milk in a churn to reveal the butter (truth) within. That is, external/theoretical knowledge becomes conscious and takes the form of a permanent virtue only when it is churned and applied through lived experience (put into action) (Gölpınarlı, 1974, p. 476). The human being taking charge of themselves means ceasing to be a passive object and building an active personality where knowledge and morality are made visible in their own actions. This existential ground, put forward by Sufi philosophy centuries ago, also forms the philosophical infrastructure of the search for ontological and epistemological integrity against the mechanical human model of modern education (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 5).

4. Türkiye Century Education Model and the 'Virtue-Value-Action' Cycle

One of the most important points in the common text of TCEM is the "Virtue-Value-Action" (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 35) framework, which is one of the strongest aspects of the Model. This framework is almost the practical educational counterpart of the theoretical expression that Bayrakdar conceptualizes as the transition from habit to consciousness. According to the Model, the values aimed to be acquired by the student are not to be loaded as abstract concepts, but are put into action by the student, thereby turning into a part of the agent themselves and becoming an inseparable part of the student's personality, namely a virtue (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 36). Thus, instead of a value being defined and memorized in its abstract form, the aim is for the student to internalize (make conscious) that value to incorporate it into themselves and then transform it into action at every relevant moment of their life. Through this process of bringing into consciousness via action, it will be possible for the value in question to emerge as a virtue in the student.

A similar parallel to the one between Bayrakdar's concept of bringing into consciousness and the objectives of TCEM can also be found in the thoughts of our great mystic Mevlânâ, who deeply influenced Bayrakdar and many other thinkers. According to Mevlânâ, human beings comprehend the truth not through purely theoretical reflection, but through the relationships and orientations (actions/states) they establish with the entities in the world. Action is the manifestation of inner intent and consciousness in the external world. In Mevlânâ's words:

> Butter is as if non-existent in buttermilk, yet buttermilk has unfurled its banner in the realm of existence. If you have unchurned, fresh buttermilk, do not consume it without churning it to extract its butter. Come, turn it from hand to hand with knowledge so that it may reveal what it conceals (Gölpınarlı, 1974, p. 426).

According to Mevlânâ, for the butter—the essence or truth of the buttermilk visible in the realm of existence—to emerge, it must be turned from hand to hand under the guidance of someone who knows the method; that is, the theoretical must be put into practice. These expressions, which clarified the phenomenological understanding of the essence centuries ago, resemble Bayrakdar's view of how worship ceases to be a mere physical ritual and, through the union of intent and action, becomes "true worship and freedom" (Bayrakdar, 1987, p. 18). Furthermore, these statements by Mevlânâ perfectly align with the understanding in TCEM that the student must transition from passively receiving knowledge to transforming it into social participation, just behavior, or problem-solving (action). These emerging similarities prove that action holds a vital importance for the student to grasp the essence within knowledge, or in phenomenological terms, to descend to the essence of things.

In Mevlânâ's thought, reaching one's own truth (essence) constitutes the fundamental starting point before reaching the truth of things. In the second volume of the *Mesnevi*, Mevlânâ tells the story of a thirsty man behind a brick wall who throws pieces torn from the wall into the water just to at least hear the sound of the water. When the man threw the piece of brick, the water called out:

> O man, said the water, what benefit is there for you in throwing bricks at me, in stoning me?" The thirsty man replied: "O water, I have two benefits; I will never cease throwing these stones. The first benefit is hearing the sound of the water; to the thirsty, that sound is like the sound of the rebec. The other benefit is this: with every brick I tear off and throw, I draw a little closer to the pure, clear water. With every tearing of a brick, the high wall becomes a little lower due to the reduction of the bricks. The lowering of the wall is a closeness; its disappearance will be a union, a meeting (Gölpınarlı, 1973, p. 194).

The water from which the human being is severed represents their truth. While tearing off pieces from the wall to hear a sound from their truth behind it, the human being quenches their thirst for the essence, while at the same time drawing closer to the essence by diminishing the wall.

Mevlânâ's description of the human being who thirsts for and strives to reach their essence foreshadows, centuries in advance, the student profile in TCEM who takes responsibility for their own essence and gradually brings the essence of things into consciousness. The same understanding is repeated in Yunus's couplet mentioned above. All of them speak not of a human being who carries knowledge like a load, but of one who changes, transforms, and enters into another state because of it. Again, they unanimously argue that for a human being to turn their face toward the truth, they must first return to their own essence. What is discussed here is not merely a simple curriculum change, but rather a modification of the epistemological architecture and the subject at the focus of this architecture. The primary goal of an education built upon this philosophical background will not be to create masses loaded with external information. On the contrary, it will strive to offer a ground that uncovers the human being's "essence". The *Türkiye Century Education Model* states that it approaches the human being within the unity of soul and body (ontological integrity) and the unity of knowledge and wisdom (epistemological integrity) (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 5).

TCEM seems to have taken upon itself the task of

constructing a student personality capable of carrying and sustaining this targeted ontological and epistemological integrity. The epistemological leg of this personality construction is to ensure that knowledge penetrates the individual's self, rejecting that it remains at the level of a dry theoretical transfer. TCEM, as is the case in almost the entirety of Sufi thought, including Mevlânâ, accepts that "there is an intimacy between the human being and the universe". Beyond the fact that the universe—the "macrocosm" in the physical sense—and the human being—the "microcosm"—are composed of the same elements, the potential within the human being to contemplate the truth makes them the vicegerent of God (Ünal, 2020a, p. 62). Mevlânâ's thought, which views the human being as the holistic subject of a moral/ontological journey, overlaps with TCEM in this respect. A student profile built upon such a human ideal must internalize every kind of knowledge presented to them in their own consciousness by making a "phenomenological leap", in Bayrakdar's definition, thereby becoming themselves (Bayrakdar, 1987, p. 3). What is expressed as a phenomenological leap is the leap of the student's consciousness to the essence of existence, that is, the essence behind the visible. Only in this way can the student transition from knowledge of words (*kal ilmi*) to knowledge of state (*hâl ilmi*). In the words of TCEM, this is an axiological maturity (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 6).

The objective of TCEM can be summarized as bringing forth a competent and virtuous student personality who can see the truth of the things around them as well as their own truth, and thus organize their life in this direction by taking charge of their own essence. According to TCEM, the entity that will construct this personality, which is to be built with the ideal of possessing this axiological maturity, is the program itself. However, at this point, Mevlânâ, Yunus, and similar thinkers in the tradition depart from TCEM. Nurettin Topçu, whom we regard as one of the last links of the tradition, in his work *Türkiye'nin Maarif Meselesi* (The Education Question of Turkey) under the headings of the *Muallim* (Teacher) and their responsibilities, states that it is the *Muallim* who must realize this personality construction. According to him,

> Muallim is not merely an official; they are perhaps a blacksmith who shapes young souls by forging them on an anvil of meaning unique to themselves... they must raise the youth, who is a candidate to play a role in worldly life, as a whole human being who possesses views unique to themselves in the face of the universe and who can create rules of life for themselves (Topçu, 1997, p. 61).

The teacher (*Muallim*) will shape the student like a blacksmith. Raising students with such submission in today's world is difficult for most of us to accept. We believe that what is not trusted here is the educators rather than the method. Understanding Topçu's expressions as leaving students in the hands of current teachers would lead us to an impasse. The teacher to whom Topçu confidently entrusts the student is someone who has grasped their own essence and possesses a civilizational ideal completely unique to themselves according to this essence. According to Topçu, "Our era is an era capable of making the human being brutal, cruel, merciless, ruthless, and loveless. For the guide of humanity, which always walks on the path of progress, is the machine, a heartless, conscienceless entity" (Topçu, 1997, p. 112).

Topçu's choice of the concepts of "machine" and "progress", which form the backbone of modern thought, as the corruptors of human beings is not accidental. These concepts are the sacred values of the system active in his era and up to the present day, a system termed "modern" whose roots were laid by prominent figures such as Descartes in philosophy and Newton in science. According to Topçu, being corrupted by these sacred values is the common fate of underdeveloped societies. If we want to be an exception to this fate, we must ensure that, starting from primary school, the child is treated not just as a 'candidate for a scholar' but as a candidate for a mature and moral human being. According to him, personality construction is for the human being to escape from being an imitator of others and to take charge of their existence by returning to their own ontological origin (essence). The teacher will be the guide who removes the student from being a passive object and makes them a free subject who constructs their own truth (essence) by feeding on a "meaning unique to themselves" (Topçu, 1997, p. 63). The teacher from whom these are expected is the teacher who is the founder of civilizations, distinct from an educator produced by the modern system.

When we read Topçu's critique of education as a kind of critique of modern thought, it becomes clearer that it is about the construction of a personality capable of carrying the metaphysical understanding of a civilization on the verge of collapse within their bosom, rather than being about educational content or a legislative regulation. In Topçu's words,

> It is the teachers who build and destroy civilizations. In a country where the teacher is valued and respected, people are happy and virtuous. Nations where the teacher is debased and their profession is held in contempt have fallen, degraded, and are undoubtedly wretched (Topçu, 1997, p. 63).

According to him, the teacher who deserves respect, as he gives many examples from history, is far beyond an ordinary civil servant. The teacher is a personality capable

of working the human soul as a free artist, mobilizing all compiled knowledge toward a common civilizational ideal. According to him, if we think of the opposite and regard the teacher as a mere official—a cog in a gigantic machine—it will be difficult for that giant to stand. While all civilizations rose under the leadership of such teachers who enlightened and built the soul of the society, whenever this was forgotten and the teacher was trivialized, those civilizations declined just as they had risen. In Topçu's words:

> The teacher's role in working our willpower is more important than the previous ones. For our destiny is at stake here. The question 'Toward what should we go? What should we want?', and the need for movement that gives rise to this, reaches its goal through the training of our habits (Topçu, 1997, p. 69).

Topçu describes someone who directs and guides—that is, someone who manages the movement according to the framing morality of a civilization. He defined this similarly to the understanding of the human being who creates themselves through their actions in several versions of the famous existentialist philosophies and phenomenological approaches of his own era. The reason for this similarity lies in the similarity of the critique of modern thought mentioned earlier. According to Topçu, "the essence of the human being is movement; whatever they do, that is what they are" (Topçu, 2006, p. 50). This sentence, answering the philosophical question "What is the human being?", defines the human being as an entity that constructs themselves through choices by their own hand. This is a complete existentialist answer. The teacher's role in this understanding is quite significant. Through willpower training, the teacher will help the student take charge of their destiny while protecting them against all objectifying currents from the outside. Because will is not merely a mental conception, but the manifestation of an internal consciousness as "movement" in the external world—that is, its actualization (Topçu, 2006, p. 50). The manifestation of values acquired through Topçu's willpower training by the human hand in the world is, in fact, a complete theory of morality.

The Compass Metaphor, inspired by Mevlânâ, is a concrete and geometric philosophical expression of the "ontological and epistemological integrity" aimed for in education (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 6). As settled in our cultural memory, the fixed foot of the compass (the central needle) represents the unshakeable anchoring of the human being in their own existential essence, namely in moral, cultural, and native roots (*knowing oneself*) (Kalın, 2021, p. 69). The other, traveling foot symbolizes the epistemological openness that embraces universal science, civilizations, and all humanity (seventy-two nations). The philosophical requirement of this geometric structure is as follows: the deeper and stronger the fixed foot of the compass presses, the wider and safer the diameter of the circle (universal opening) that the traveling foot can draw. If the fixed foot loses its center, the compass inevitably slips, which results in education tearing the human being away from their own roots and dragging them into "epistemic slavery" and imitation. Therefore, the compass metaphor explains the dynamic and ontological balance between local and national personality construction and universal competence (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 5).

It is possible to embody this student model, which perfectly overlaps with Mevlânâ's ideal of the *İnsan-ı Kâmil* (the human being who transforms knowledge into state), under the headings of "*Yetkin ve Erdemli İnsan*" (Competent and Virtuous Human), "*Erdem-Değer-Eylem*" (Virtue-Value-Action), and "*Epistemological/Aksiyolojik Bütünlük*" (Epistemological/Axiological Integrity) in *Ortak Metin* (Common Text). First, according to TCEM, "Students must not only acquire knowledge but also gain the ability to use that knowledge to solve problems encountered in daily life, make moral decisions, and make sense of complex situations" (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 5). These statements reflect Mevlânâ's ideal of transitioning from the knowledge of words (*kal ilmi*) to the knowledge of state (*hâl ilmi*). The common text of TCEM rejects that the student keeps knowledge in their mind as a mere theoretical heap (object) and defines applying knowledge to life as "wisdom". Again, according to the common text, "Wisdom, which is the maturity realized by the bringing together of knowledge and virtue, and which arises from a person's recognition of their own essence and expresses a multi-dimensional perspective, constitutes another aspect of epistemological integrity" (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 6). These expressions of wisdom emerging from the discovery of one's own essence appear parallel to Yunus Emre's words "knowledge is to know oneself" or the relationship Mevlânâ establishes between the human essence and truth. Second, we must look at what TCEM defines as axiological maturity, which refers to the internalization of acquired knowledge. According to TCEM, with axiological maturity,

> The aim is for the student to understand and evaluate values and moral principles; to develop a moral consciousness in perceiving their environment, putting their thoughts into practice... with the ability to act in accordance with these, and to reflect the values they have acquired in their actions (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 6).

Defining the student's transforming of values into a consciousness (bringing into consciousness) internalized within their own consciousness rather than as an external rule as axiological maturity, the text emphasizes that for

values to become a permanent consciousness in the student, "...it is aimed to support values in accordance with the context and to facilitate their internalization" (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 36). Finally, TCEM states that the student must apply the values they have internalized to their life to turn them into virtues:

> Virtues represent the strong aspects of personality aimed to be acquired by the individual as a result of educational activities. Individuals can reach these virtues through the values they develop as a result of their lived experiences. The values possessed by a person show themselves in their actions (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 36).

In this context, the Model's understanding of the human being targets an individual who does not merely carry moral elements abstractly in their inner world, but who applies (practices) these elements in their life by turning them into actions. It is required that virtues and values are not merely known, but are embodied in behavior (transformed into a state).

In many of its parts, the common text depicts an ontological integrity that puts the student's mind, will, and heart to work together, turning knowledge into action. A similarity to this integrity can be seen in the dual human ideal Topçu expresses with the words: "While one thinks in the light of reason, the other flies on the wing of love…" (Topçu, 2018, p. 156). The holistic human profile mentioned in this statement from Topçu perfectly matches TCEM's idea that knowledge should emerge from memorization and become a "manifestation" (action/praxis) that guides the human being's moral actions in the world. The Model's definition of the competent (utilizing knowledge) and virtuous (transforming knowledge into morality) human being is the structured equivalent in modern educational language of *insan-ı kâmil* ideal in Sufi thought.

5. A Systematic Tension: TCEM's Programmatic Personality Construction Versus Topçu's Existential Teacher Ideal

An ontological gap and tension emerge between the "Personality Construction" objective, curated institutionally and programmatically by the Türkiye Century Education Model, and Nurettin Topçu's radically "Teacher-centered" existential educational philosophy. TCEM, through the "Virtue-Value-Action" cycle, ontological integrity goals, and structured curriculum learning outcomes, attempts to construct personality almost through an institutional and academic program design (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 36). On the other hand, Nurettin Topçu views the reduction of education to legislation, technical content, or bureaucratic regulation as an extension of modernity's mechanical and desoulling structure that objectifies the human being (Topçu, 1997, p. 11). According to Topçu, personality is not an object that can be manufactured with institutional formulas or technical templates; it can only be constructed through the existential encounter of subjects possessing moral will (Topçu, 1997, p. 46).

At this point, the crux of the tension is formed by the concept of the 'Teacher' (*Muallim*). In TCEM's institutional vision, the teacher is frequently in the role of an active "practitioner" who carries the program's objectives into the classroom and translates them into action (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 5). In contrast, in Topçu's philosophy, the teacher is not a mere clerk or a cog in the system; they are 'a blacksmith who works young souls by forging them on an anvil of meaning unique to themselves' and a free artist capable of working the human soul (Topçu, 1997, p. 61). According to Topçu, personality construction is possible only under the guidance of this free artist, with the student ceasing to be a passive object and taking charge of their own destiny and moral will. No matter how local and accurate the axiological and ontological integrity goals of TCEM are on paper (Ministry of National Education, 2025, p. 6), the sole power that will bring these goals to life, transforming knowledge from a dry memorization into consciousness and action, is that idealistic teacher ideal described by Topçu (Topçu, 1997, p. 61). Consequently, the success of the Model lies not in its institutional perfection, but in the integration of an existential and phenomenological understanding of the teacher that can transcend this mechanical structure.

6. Conclusion

We have pointed out that the epistemological dominance of modernity, which detaches human beings from their own truth and "life-world" (Lebenswelt) to reduce them to a mechanical object, has led to the desouling of education and, in Nurettin Topçu's words, to a "loss of personality". As demonstrated in this study, breaking away from the rote-learning structure of modern education—which leaves an unconscious "unanchored bundle of load" in the student's mind—is possible only through a philosophical and existential leap. Just as in Mevlânâ's story where the thirsty man dismantles piece by piece the brick wall that stands as an obstacle between himself and the water in order to reach the truth (water) and hear its life-giving sound (Ünal, 2020a, pp. 181–182); the human being must also demolish the veils of mechanized habit and rote learning surrounding them to reach their own truth. When Husserl's phenomenological method of bracketing (*epoché*)—which suspends dogmatic assumptions—is synthesized with Mehmet Bayrakdar's concept of "transition from habit to consciousness", it becomes clearly evident that education must cease to be a

simple external transfer of skills and transform into a consciousness (*şuur*) wherein the student makes sense of knowledge within themselves.

The philosophical ground of the Türkiye Century Education Model (TCEM) intends to be a manifestation of this awakening through its goals of ontological and epistemological integrity and axiological maturity. The Model is an effort to reconstruct in modern educational language the internal search for truth, signaled by Yunus Emre's maxim "knowledge is to know oneself", and Mevlânâ's ideal of transforming theoretical knowledge (*kal*) into lived experience (*hâl*). The "Virtue-Value-Action" cycle, situated at the center of the common text, rejects the memorization of moral rules as abstract dogmas and positions action (praxis) as the ontological manifestation of inner consciousness on the world stage.

Nonetheless, as intertextual readings and the core theses of this study demonstrate, this "metaphysical integrity" distilled from the profound critiques directed at modern thought by Mevlânâ, Yunus Emre, Topçu, and Bayrakdar has not found a satisfying and systematic place in TCEM, which by nature is not a text of philosophical critique. The in-depth arguments in question remain more of an eclectic conception within the Model (Akpınar et al., 2024, pp. 68–69), and in particular, the "Teacher" (*Muallim*) ideal—which is the main constituting element of education in Nurettin Topçu's philosophy—constitutes the most vital deficiency of the Model that is in need of completion. According to Topçu, the teacher is not a mere official who only implements a curriculum and transmits information; they are "a blacksmith who works young souls by forging them on an anvil of meaning unique to themselves", a free artist who shapes souls (Topçu, 1997, p. 61). No matter how accurate TCEM's goals are on paper, the success of the system is dependent upon the presence of idealistic teachers who can transcend this mechanical structure, awaken the will and movement in the student, and transform morality into action.

In conclusion, the "Competent and Virtuous Human" targeted by the Türkiye Century Education Model is a holistic human being who, like in the Compass Metaphor distilled from Mevlânâ's philosophy, has one foot anchored firmly in their own ontological, moral, and cultural roots (essence), while embracing universal knowledge with the other foot, and transforming every value acquired into a virtue by practicing it in life. However, for this model to escape becoming merely an instrumental curriculum reform, it must be supported by the teacher assuming an existential guidance and the student attaining a consciousness of existence, much like a thirsty person's orientation toward the truth. When this philosophical integration is achieved, education can turn into an ontological resurrection and a 'return to the essence' movement that shapes the future by embracing its own civilizational roots.

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