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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE HIGHER PERSONA AND THE UNIQUENESS OF NATIONAL CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

A unique culture can only come into being in a setting that is truly independent. Since cultural uniqueness arises within the structure of nation-states that bear the hallmark of complete autonomy, that takes us to the foundations of the political economy of the construction of uniqueness. The entire population of a given country is the collective sculptor of a sculpture. Every country has its own Higher Persona, and the singularization of that Higher Persona is brought about through the uniqueness of the activities of the people inhabiting that country. At the same time, the Higher Persona is not fixed but rather is in a state of constant flux, altering form across the ages like a sculpture that changes shape, becoming beautiful at times and unattractive or indistinct at others. If a country is adept at hewing that sculpture, which is a reflection of the Higher Persona, the cultural mass will increase and create a more intensive gravitational pull by warping the cultural grounds yet further. A country that increases its cultural mass will pull towards itself countries that have not been able to achieve an equivalent amount of cultural mass. Within that context, in order for a country like Turkey to construct a unique culture and increase its cultural mass, thereby more clearly defining its Higher Persona, it must be fully independent in a political-economic sense. The construction of the nation-state and national character is analogous with the construction of national uniqueness. In a way, the identity of a country is represented by stones in architecture and images in cinema.

INTRODUCTION

This study, which we have titled "The Higher Persona" in line with the primary arguments made here, came into being through our efforts to shape that concept, which itself is closely related to the problem of uniqueness. In making those claims, it takes up the following six hypotheses: 1) Stories are the means by which all answers are channeled to listeners; 2) The problem of uniqueness is a problem of freedom; 3) Every product draws a share of its producer's character; 4) The more unique a producer is, the more unique will be the products that absorb a share of the producer's character; 5) The most suitable environment for the construction of uniqueness can be found in the nation-state; 6) The extent to which a national culture becomes unique stands in direct proportion to increases in the amount of cultural products created by unique individuals. In the case of Turkey, when we consider the level of uniqueness of works that are being produced both in academia as well as in the field of the arts, it immediately becomes apparent that the costs associated with a lack of uniqueness are far greater than we may have initially thought. Given that situation, clearly we are faced with an issue of uniqueness that needs to be resolved. As such, identifying what uniqueness is and explaining the conditions it creates and how it gets started are indispensable for solving the problems we experience with regard to uniqueness. In keeping close track of that entire process, one issue we should bear in mind is the fact that first and foremost uniqueness begins at the individual level. Since the processes involved in the constitution of uniqueness at the individual level have an impact on the scale of the nation, which itself is comprised of the sum total of

individuals, it is necessary to resolve the matter of individual uniqueness so we can solve the problem of uniqueness in national culture. By taking those matters into account as a whole, this study will proceed as follows. The first section will take up the issue of stories, which are the conduits by means of which answers are conveyed. Regardless of whether they are steeped in religion, science or philosophy, the answers we obtain are invariably transmitted to us through stories. Given that situation, the uniqueness of our stories has a direct bearing on the uniqueness of our answers. And because stories come into being in the minds of their producers, this process involves the individual uniqueness of the narrators of the stories. In the second section, the proposition that the self is a constructed concept, which to date has been treated extensively in the literature, will be examined through the views of David Hume. Offering up a discussion of the relationship between ideas and impressions as well as the absence of causality, this section will also explore our need for the stories we fabricate in life, which is full of uncertainty. Setting out from the proposition that individual uniqueness and national economic freedom are inherently intertwined and complementary, the third section will argue that the most suitable environment for the development of individual uniqueness is situated within the structure of the nation-state. This section will also propose the concept of the Higher Persona, which is the underlying focus of this study, and offer up a brief discussion of the problem of uniqueness through examples drawn from Turkish cinema.

Part One: Stories, Answers and the Problem of Uniqueness: Three approaches have been set forth as a means of answering the major questions that humanity has posed over the years. Essentially, these approaches, which can be enumerated as religion, philosophy, and science, revolve around similar questions. The primary difference between them is couched in the form of the relations that are established between the answers that are given and the recipients of those answers. Answers that are steeped in religion, the adventure of attaining which starts off on the basis of speculation, require no proof in the end because all they require is faith in the answers we receive with respect to our fundamental questions. That faith is sufficient in and of itself as the answers don't have to persuade us of their truth. For that reason, religious explanations can be seen as being speculative and situated within systems that are closed off to critique. As for the scientific approach, it demands definitive knowledge and follows a maxim that says "all definite knowledge...belongs to science (Russell, 2012: 11). Scientific knowledge is open to critique; it starts off with hypotheses and, while those hypotheses may be founded on belief, those beliefs should be directed towards knowledge that is demonstrated through proof and so definitive that there can be no doubt about its veracity. Seen in that way, the realm of science is at the same time a dumping ground for errors heaped with the disproven hypotheses that have accumulated over time. And then there is yet another approach, an "intermediary field" which in terms of its speculative nature is akin to religion and as regards its openness to observation, reason, and critique, as well as its quest for definitiveness, is similar to science, and that field is philosophy. Sometimes it veers close to religion (Plato), at times it is based primarily on observation but when observation reaches its limits it shifts to a mode based solely on reason (Democritus), and at yet other times it sides fully with science (Aristotle). However, it is neither religion nor science, but rather a "No Man's Land" (Russell, 1996: 13). And then there is art, which wanders ghost-like among these three fields. Now, if we were to reduce those explanations to a condensed formula, the following would emerge: Religion, which is speculative and closed to critique; science, which steers clear of speculation and, since it seeks out definitive knowledge, is open to critique; and lastly philosophy, which, since it straddles religion and science can at times be speculative and at other times can be based on observation or pure reason, and while philosophy pursues definitive knowledge, debates are ongoing about whether it has actually made any progress (Kenny, 2011: 12), as a consequence of which it represents a form of answering that requires not faith but critique.

Within the bounds of those three fields we circle around, trying to answer major questions that are fundamentally similar. For instance, all three fields attempt to provide answers to the question, "What are the roots of our existence?" Just about every religion has unequivocal, authoritative answers to the question of human existence. If we consider the Abrahamic religions, we can see that all three of them provide more or less the same explanation: After God created Adam from dust, He breathed life into him and granted him dominion over all living creatures. Although it torments Satan, Adam is able to freely roam the Garden of Eden, but as time goes by, even that becomes tedious, so he asks God to create a wife for him. God complies, creating Eve out of one of his ribs, but on one condition: They mustn't eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. That restriction thrills Satan, who has been biding his time waiting for such an opportunity, and he sets about convincing them to eat the fruit. When God sees that Adam and Eve have entered into sexual relations, He becomes angry and, depending on the narrative, he either casts them down to Earth or punishes them with life in the world, thus marking the beginning of our worldly existence. As we obtain the religious answer to our question, in effect we are listening to a story, and the answers to our questions reach us through stories. To put it another way, all answers are borne along to us by stories. And that doesn't just hold true for religious explanations, as science and philosophy also use stories to convey their answers. Whether an answer is religious, scientific, or philosophical is determined by whether it has been tested, proven, or critiqued, but stories are always a part of the equation. An explanation that reduces the entirety of human history to class conflict is just as much a story as the narrative

of Adam and Eve being cast down into the world as punishment for engaging in sexual relations. The latent attitudes inherent in stories, which vary depending on whether they are based on faith, proof, or arguments, determine their positioning. So when giving answers to existing questions (the assumption here being that we are not religious figures because they have already given their answers), one should above all else be a good storyteller. Stories should be framed in such a way that they transcend existing answers and, in order to ensure that they have a noteworthy impact, they should be possessed of a marked difference. Put concisely, this is a matter pertaining to the uniqueness of stories and the answers that arise through them. As such, it could be argued that the reason why stories have fallen by the wayside in Turkey is that a critical level of uniqueness has not been achieved. Setting out from that point, a particular generalization could drive the subject at hand forward: People who write stories that are inherently unique and grounded in that uniqueness, and simply for that reason are able to *fabricate* unique answers, are engaged in a labor that is truly worthy of note. In the previous sentence, the verb "fabricate" was used in a positive sense, even at the risk of incurring critiques. All answers are fabrications; on the path to Truth, which can never truly be attained, they represent an approximate convergence, and while proven fabrications can only explain a part of the Truth—if indeed there is a singular Truth—along with their flaws they bear within themselves the problems of subsequent stages. The realm of science advances with these truths blemished by flaws, and philosophy has its share of them as well. Philosophy doesn't lead to the acquisition of new knowledge but rather is involved in the arrangement of knowledge, and in essence it entails a "matter of meaning" (Kenny, 2018: 13). In line with the assertions we have made here, it can perhaps best be summed up as follows: Philosophy consists of expertly fabricated stories. Empedocles' story about the four elements is a good example of that. In his narrative, the four elements were brought together by love but evil ultimately drove them apart, which resulted in the creation of all matter. When love once again becomes a hegemonic force, everything will be brought back together. Plato's story about ideas could also be cited here as a good example of the power of narratives: The origins of the realm of sensory experience, which is always changing and which we perceive by way of our senses, can be traced to the world of Ideas, which are immutable, timeless, and *absolute*. In order to understand the mutable world, we must first comprehend the immutable Realm of Ideas purely by way of thought. The story about Adam and Eve is just as much an answer as Plato's Realm of Ideas, and both of them are finely crafted fabricated stories.

Here we reach a crucial point in the interrogations posed by this study: How can we be unique? What conditions are conducive to the emergence of uniqueness? In attempting to answer that question, we can turn to the work of the ancient Greeks, whose epoch of genius lasted around 150 years. That era, which spanned a period of time bracketed by the lives of Thales and Aristotle, was populated by intrepid fabulists and storytellers who kept a distance from absurdity and maintained a strict dedication to consistency. The ancient Greeks never shied away from boldness; the intrepidity that led to the creation of the Demiurge was one and the same with the daring line of thought which posited that a person can never bathe in the same river twice. Without it, Socrates would never have drunk a cup of hemlock and Empedocles would never have thrown himself into the volcanic pit of Mount Etna. In the end, if it hadn't been for that sense of courage, neither philosophy nor science would have come into being. However, we should bear in mind that while intrepidity is an important quality with regard to being unique, boldness in itself does not lead down the path of unique fabrications. Let's try to put that in more concrete terms: In order to head in the direction of producing unique fabrications, we have to take into account internal and external traits. By internal traits the implication is that a given individual's skill set should be suitable for such an endeavor. The individual should be equipped with the ability to spend long periods of time deep in thought, tenaciously pursue the answers to tantalizing questions, and follow up on nagging queries for which they have no answers. To put it in more contemporary terms, their "operating systems" should function smoothly in those fields. If someone is equipped with such

an operating system, the path to uniqueness will open up for them in line with the suitability of external conditions. With respect to the latter concept, an environment of freedom is necessary, as the road to uniqueness is undergirded by freedom. While that may be the case, at this point the issue of uniqueness, which is already challenging enough on its own, appears to have become ensnared in another difficult issue, that of freedom. Taking up ancient Greece as a field of study, identifying the features inherent to that civilization's external conditions, may make our work a little easier. We contend that the intellectual explosion created by philosophy in ancient Greece was facilitated by three structures, namely religious, social, and political forms. As regards the religious structure, the gods created by the Greeks placed little importance on the Greek people themselves. Abandoned and ignored by their gods, the Greeks were unable to get any divine answers to the questions they asked. That situation, however, laid the groundwork that would lead the ancient Greeks to arrive at bold answers. As for the social structure, although it may have been marked by fluctuations over time, for the most part it was based on aristocracy. Since they had established a large number of overseas colonies and increased their wealth in affluent port cities, the Greeks had plenty of time on their hands as well as the advantages afforded by the mild climate of the lands they inhabited. In fact, the climate was highly conducive to the evolution of their culture into a civilization, and while they contemplated cloudless early spring skies, they had the time and drive of inquisitiveness to question the relationship between changes in the positions of constellations and the annual flooding of rivers. Also, the ancient Greeks were well aware that the Egyptians had developed means of calculating area on the basis of triangles, and they would make great strides forward in mathematics relative to the conditions of the time by following up on the work of Thales. Lastly, in terms of political structure, which displayed the same variability as the social structure, ancient Greece was full of turmoil instigated by internal and external threats. It could be argued that the division of Greek lands into city-states and the fact that they never experienced the rule of a large state, meaning that governments didn't acquire vast amounts of power, facilitated the creation of an environment of relative freedom on the grounds of new ideas. Rousseau contended that the decline of Greek morals began in a dialectic manner with the advancement of art and that Greece, which was always dedicated to knowledge yet fond of pleasure, constantly changed masters (Rousseau, 2009: 12). The deterioration of intellectuality in Greece picked up pace when Alexander the Great established a vast state, and by the time of the Romans, the proliferation of great ideas had come to a complete halt; if we put it in terms of a commonly drawn conclusion, the Romans had no philosophy.

A path to uniqueness can open up when external conditions and the individual abilities associated with internal conditions converge. On that point, the communications that an individual establishes with himself are of crucial importance and the individual should be able to clearly express himself on the linguistic plane. The self is created through language; the individual who transforms his words into generative loam constructs himself on the level of linguistics, ultimately sculpting himself and attempting to get as close as possible to his essence, which he will never actually reach. Just as in the story in which God created Adam from dust and breathed life into him, the individual uses the words he transforms into loam to create himself and blow life into that self by way of the mind. After pondering over it at great length, he comes to believe that the self he has created through words is his real self; by contemplating that self in the most candid, forthright manner possible, he tries to reach his true port of calling. At the end of that period of candid contemplation of that essence which he will never attain—if there is no Truth, then there is no Essence—he has no choice but to believe a lie that he constructed with words; in fact, in order to keep going we all have to believe the lies we tell about ourselves. And just like the act of fabrication, those lies bear a positive meaning. We must believe them so we can cover more ground and traverse greater distances. Those candid lies are our starting point, as well as our sanctuaries and basis of action. The individual who has undergone such an experience takes possession of that quintessence which he believes to be his true essence. If that

individual happens to be an artist who has found a place for himself in the field of art which, as was discussed earlier in this essay, wanders ghost-like among the three fundamental approaches to answering questions, *the products that this individual produces take a share of his essence*. In other words, the individual's products appropriate some of that individual's unique self. At this stage, the individual is both his own idea and Demiurge as well as part of the mutable world. The mind, which is the Demiurge of the creative individual, perceives the essence it constructs as an idea and creates artistic products by taking a share of that essence. That's why the products created by unique individuals are unique in a manner analogous to their uniqueness; the individual who constructs their character in such a way that it is unique to the greatest extent possible goes on shaping themselves through the act of production. The relationship between the individual producer and his product is reciprocal; the individual creates the product and the product creates the individual, shaping his personality. This is a ceaseless process of creating, sculpting, and shaping, and production is one of our interminable endeavors. The individual who brings cultural products into being by drawing on his uniqueness makes a statement about himself through the products he creates, and that statement is spread by means of others experiencing that cultural product. When others experience a cultural product through their senses, they first establish an impression of it and then arrive at an idea about the producer through the product. The idea under discussion here stands in reference to the general concepts and notions that the sensory object, or in our case here the cultural product, brings into being in the minds of observers through certain repetitions. In a sense, this is in line with what Epicurus referred to as *prolepsis*:

[Epicurus] says that prolepsis is actually based on sensory impressions. But the senses are particular in nature and come into being as a consequence of the actual existence and effects of objects that have root causes. When the sources of impacts disappear, impressions that arise through those effects continue to exist in the mind and remain as memories. The accumulation of memories that occurs as the result of repeated sensations brings about experience and experience in turn paves the way for the emergence of [...] presuppositions and concepts in the mind. Hence, for example, the general notion or concept of the human arises in our minds through the experiences of particular individuals that are repeated and remembered. (Arslan, 2019: 53).

In that way, we arrive at our conceptualizations of what it means to be human through our experiences, which are individual and based on repetition. So what about cases in which we've never actually met a particular person but we know them through, for example, one of their novels or films? Our ideas about that person will be shaped by exposure to and hence experience and impressions of that product, which *takes a share of* the creator's personality and makes a statement about them. The *persona* we have thus indirectly created does not necessarily have to reflect reality, and in any case the important thing is not the persona that has been created through the work but rather its uniqueness. In order to shed a modicum of light on this complex process and bolster our proposed notion of the Higher Persona, the next section will examine the views of David Hume, which both offer up solutions and pose certain problems. The subsequent section will consider the related issue of nation-states and then go on to further explore our proposal for the concept of the Higher Persona. The final section will then delve into the relationship between national cinema and the Higher Persona and offer up a discussion about how that relationship could be brought up to an ideal level.

Part Two: David Hume and Ideas/Impressions: David Hume argues that mental perceptions can be divided into two categories (2019: 6). In making that distinction, Hume relied on a difference which he referred to in terms of force and vivacity. If the force is weaker, the perception is an Idea, while the opposite is an Impression. The difference between Ideas and Impressions can be exemplified as follows: When someone hears a composition by Tatyos Effendi or looks at the Twin Minaret Madrasa in Erzurum, the entirety of those vivacious perceptions, which are based on the five senses, constitutes an Impression. In short, an Impression involves the transfer of information about the external world to the mind by means of the

senses and the extremely vivid perceptions acquired during the course of that process. This quality of Impressions is essentially what sets them apart from Ideas, as Ideas are weaker perceptions; they are not constituted through experience in the moment, as in the case of the example above, but rather through contemplation of such experiences. In that line of reasoning, thinking about listening to a composition by Tatyos Effendi cannot stir up one's emotions as forcefully or vivaciously as actually listening to the music. Put concisely, in Hume's distinction, Impressions are forceful and vivacious while Ideas are weak and faint. At this point, it may be useful to ask the following question: Can ideas come into being without recourse to impressions? Hume replies with a definitive "no," saying, for example, that it would be nearly inconceivable for someone who has never seen a particular shade of the color blue to truly comprehend what the color is like (2019: 19). Hume's primary goal is to do away with metaphysical explanations that lie completely outside the realm of impressions:

Here indeed lies the justest and most plausible objection against a considerable part of metaphysics, that they are not properly a science; but arise either from the fruitless efforts of human vanity, which would penetrate into subjects utterly inaccessible to the understanding, or from the craft of popular superstitions, which, being unable to defend themselves on fair ground, raise these intangling brambles to cover and protect their weakness. Chaced from the open country, these robbers fly into the forest, and lie in wait to break in upon every unguarded avenue of the mind, and overwhelm it with religious fears and prejudices. The stoutest antagonist, if he remit his watch a moment, is oppressed. And many, through cowardice and folly, open the gates to the enemies, and willingly receive them with reverence and submission, as their legal sovereigns. (Hume, 1748: 10)

Holding up the world of experience as the source of every type of impression that is constituted in the mind thus entails the rejection of such metaphysical explanations. In that sense, Hume was vehemently opposed to Plato's Ideas, which were not based on impressions of any kind and were solely explained by way of the mental faculties. As such, there is no room for explanations based on the *a priori* acceptance of issues or metaphysical beginnings. For Hume, it is impossible to establish cause and effect relationships because effects are completely different from causes and consequently the former cannot be extrapolated from the latter (Hume 2019: 27). If we were to connect the relationships between that which is visible to a cause and effect relationship, we would have to go back to the distant past when those relationships first developed to make any first-hand observations, and, seeing as that is not possible, any explanations we make about that period of time will invariably be *a priori*. In following, *a priori* reasoning that is held up as being purely cerebral, independent of observations and experience in the way that it appears to the mind, can never offer any clues about what a given object has brought into being as a consequence of what or, conversely, what it may potentially cause, and likewise it cannot insinuate the existence of an unbreakable bond or relationships between those objects.

New problems arise at this point in Hume's line of reasoning. If it's not possible to establish cause and effect relationships, what are we supposed to base our judgments on? Hume sets up experience and custom as a foundation. Judgments are constituted through experience and in that process there is a dual structure at work that is thought to exist in the form of observations and a cause and effect framework within those observations. To give an example for the previous statement, which is somewhat obscure, we could say, "There is no smoke without fire," which contains two main components. First, someone sees smoke in the distance (the smoke is assumed to be an effect, so let's call it E) and believes that a fire is the cause of the smoke (let's call this C for cause). Let's say that this individual has made hundreds, even thousands, of observations on this basis, and whenever he sees E, he encounters C. As the scope of his experience broadens, he arrives at a judgment and a generalization. Saying to himself, "Smoke is the effect of fire," he concludes that if there is smoke, there must also be fire; that is to say, there cannot be smoke without fire because in his experience the two always go hand in hand, first one and then the other. After a certain point, even if smoke is seen in the distance, that doesn't drive the individual to go deal

with the fire; the mere existence of smoke leads the person to the fire, and he concludes that smoke and fire exist together. The coexistence and successiveness of smoke and fire give rise to a Belief that all such smoke comes about as a consequence of similar causes. Generalizations are made about similar situations that have been observed and conclusions are drawn, and this, in a sense, actually offers a certain amount of comfort for the individual. The comfort that is afforded by this state of affairs is rooted in the way that meaning has been ascribed to the external world. Henceforth, the individual becomes secure in his belief that connections and inferences can be made about the events that transpire in the external world and a more stable order will come into being. According to Hume, however, nothing is guaranteed; all that has been experienced is a congruity and similarity between two apparent occurrences which have resulted in conditioning and belief. Experience dictates that when one sees smoke, one must think about fire. This does not, however, demonstrate that cause and effect are actually at work; rather, it points to the habits that come into being as a consequence of congruity and similarity and the Beliefs that are steeped in them.

Even when there is no clear cause and effect relationship, people often seek refuge in such connections because Habits play such an active role. Generalizations that are made through what is deemed to be a sufficient number of observations tend to be based on Habit, not reasoned judgments, and that has other consequences as well. Habits are created by experience and belief, and hence they are bolstered by similar experiences. This means that past experiences are used to predict events that may occur in the future; to put it another way, the past is transposed to the future. Someone who repeatedly sees cloudless skies at night and wakes up to cloudless sunny skies in the morning may come to think that if there are no clouds at night, the next day will most certainly be sunny and cloudless. In such situations, past experience is consigned to the future. However, while the past is uniform in the mind, a particular cause can give rise to different results. Even if the sky is cloudless at night, it could rain in the morning. That experience is slipped into the pool of knowledge of past experience; basically, people believe that whatever has the greatest chance of transpiring is what will occur. The human mind cannot move forward without first establishing cause and effect relations, and people have to take action and engage in reason and belief. Even if a given explanation or inference is marred by a certain amount of error, people have to believe it so they can take action. In terms of the issue of uniqueness, our main subject here, this means that people test themselves with their past experiences and, after arriving at a personal idea about the self, they set about constructing and describing themselves at the linguistic level. Although every answer is lacking in some regards and possessed of a margin of error, people have no choice but to cling to one. Every visible occurrence that is seen in nature and one's social environment must be evaluated within the scope of certain cause and effect relations, and in order to be able to go on in life, generalizations need to be made and safe zones need to be created. The things that people believe will happen are probabilities, and probabilities that are likely to unfold in the future are bound up with beliefs that are derived from past experience. Phenomena, events, and the possible consequences of particular incidents are comprehended within that framework. If we step out of that framework and rely on metaphysical points of departure, we run the risk of getting lost in ambiguous terminology and drowning in a sea of vague assertions (Hume, 2019: 60). Since it is impossible to have ideas about and ponder over that which has not been experienced, judgments about the self cannot be made, and the reason why such judgments cannot be made is that it is impossible to observe the self by way of the five senses. In those moments when the self is approached at the closest point possible, it becomes entangled in our perceptions, so what we are actually observing is not the self but our perceptions (Hume, 2015: 173-174). In other words, the self cannot be grasped without getting caught up in the messages delivered by the senses. In any case, the self is impossible to comprehend as Impressions are variable and in constant flux, while the self must remain fixed because it is the essence and its fixity is diametrically opposed to the vacillations of impressions. Thus, it could be argued that we cannot create notions about the self as an "I" for the simple

reason that it is impossible to observe and we cannot develop any impressions about it; however, that does not entail the non-existence of an “I,” but rather constitutes unknowable knowledge about whether it exists or not (Russell, 2012: 302). In sum, the argument here is that the source of all Ideas is Impressions, without which there can be no ideas, notions, or thoughts. The ambiguous, uncertain world in which we live calls for meaning, fixity, and answers, and that’s why we carry out observations. The ultimate aim of observations is the establishment of similarities between events, congruities among incidents, and parameters for cause and effect relationships. However, what is actually attained is not a grasp of cause and effect relationships but a certain form of familiarity, a series of habits based on perceptions of consecutive events, and a *belief* grounded therein. Everything is enshrouded in ambiguity and so nothing can be pinned down by means of cause and effect relationships. If events could be determined in that manner, it would mean that history is heading towards a certain goal and a clearly defined point, but no such point exists—instead, there is a belief in probabilities. In our uncertain universe, we can only move forward on the basis of potentialities, by means of which airplanes hurtle through the sky, satellites are launched into orbit, and plans are drawn up for human colonies on Mars. Since we inhabit a universe that cannot be held to fixed parameters and is constantly changing and full of uncertainty, we cannot know if an immutable essence exists or not. The self cannot be observed because even if it exists, it transcends Impressions, but all the same there must be a sense of moving forward. In this stage of the discussion, Hume does not offer any recommendations and instead simply proposes that we shrug off our concerns and enjoy life. However, for us such an approach seems inadequate; in order to keep on going, an “I” needs to be created.

We should observe the universe in all its uncertainty and mutability up to a certain point and beyond that we should turn to reason. That is the approach of Democritus. Setting out from sensations, we should shift to the power of reason when sensory input proves to be insufficient for the task at hand (Arslan, 2018: 334-335). Given this situation, all we can do as human beings who are part and parcel of the universe is construct an “I” by contemplating that essence—if such a thing exists—which lies beyond the reach of the senses and fabricate it in a manner that is consistent with the assertions that have been made within the framework of this study. In light of the arguments that have been posed thus far, the following inferences can be drawn with regard to the problem of uniqueness: *Since the source of all ideas is impressions and their objects, and since in our hypothesis objects draw a share of the individual who shapes them, it is possible by means of impressions to arrive at the idea underlying the identity that the person who brought those objects (cultural products) into being wants to project. If the individual is able to create/fabricate a unique identity, his works take a share of that identity, as that uniqueness seeps into the works by means of being embedded in the character that is conveyed. Accordingly, others who observe and develop an impression of such works arrive at conclusions about the individual who created them, while the creator is able to construct the self that he wants to project to others by way of his works.*

Section Three: Nation-states and the Higher Persona: In considering the capital transformation of Europe, it becomes apparent that nation-states were built up on national industries. Starting in the 16th century, capital started to change hands, slowly at first but then more rapidly as changes in the infrastructure spread to the superstructure. Over the course of time, the evolution of land-based modes of production into machine-based industrial production gave rise to a gradual transformation in the superstructure as lifestyles grounded in land-based production shifted to lifestyles grounded in industry. When modes of production change, everything else changes too, and existing codes of life start to merge and coincide with the codes of life of the new owners of capital. In that process, the new hegemonic class begins reshaping its social lifestyle and understanding of the state and law as a means of securing its hold on capital. Sometimes that kind of reshaping comes about through compromise while at other times it is instigated by way of the

guillotine. In the 15th century, European merchants were getting better at transferring wealth to their home countries, whether through plunder and robbery or by means of trade agreements. Those European traders, who opened up new fields of commerce by engaging in geographical maneuvering, became more powerful over the course of time as they accumulated more capital, and henceforth they became the new spokesmen of capital in their motherlands. But by its very nature capital needs to constantly grow and be in motion (Marx, 2014: 45). For the new wealthy class of Europeans, this meant that capital had to be funneled into industry, i.e. machinery. This presented a problem, however, as while these capitalists may have had money, they did not possess the scientific know-how needed to build machinery. Making a carpet-weaving machine, for example, requires knowledge of physics, chemistry, mathematics, engineering, and design, but the owners of capital only knew how to make money. Given that situation, they started to finance scientists who had the knowledge but not the funds to create the necessary machinery, and that primarily involved people involved in academia. The power that was slipping through the fingers of monarchs was yet again being appropriated by the *nouveau riche*. The national bourgeoisie, which was increasingly taking control of the economies of newly emergent nation-states, dominated national industries and became the patrons of national art. This led to the advent of a complex global structure that bore within itself both wonders and horrors. For instance, Paris in the 1860s was considered to be one of the world’s most alluring cities, but beneath the aesthetics of its streets lay the labor of the populace of the homeland and the peoples of other lands too, as well as the exploitation of the natural resources that belonged to those people. Nonetheless, there were numerous artists who were able to sculpt identities for themselves with words, construct unique personas through the self-relations they established, and create unique works imbued with those personas, and they filled Paris with their artistic collaborations.

They were constructing the city not only by way of architecture but also novels, poetry, paintings, photography, and cinema. Paris was the sum total of all those means of construction. Just as in the ancient world unique people had once flocked to Athens and its environs, Paris was now the place to be. Since nation-states possess their own capital, they can turn to their own human resources in the shaping of national culture. And since they control their capital, they can rely on the national intelligentsia in the process of forming a national culture, and in that sense economic freedom engenders national uniqueness. The aggregate of the works of unique individuals who have succeeded in their productions in suitable cultural climates ensures that national culture, which is culture at large in any given country, takes on the characteristics of uniqueness. Nations that are in control of their infrastructure can also direct the formation of their superstructure, and unique cultures can only be shaped in settings that are free; national freedom, in turn, can be measured in terms of the extent to which economic processes of production are in the hands of the nation. The degree of the uniqueness of cultural processes of production stands in direct relation to the level of freedom in the national economic infrastructure. As such, the sole aim of nation-states is to acquire a *sui generis* culture that is bolstered by works that have been produced on the basis of unique personas and are imbued with a share of that uniqueness, a culture that is steeped in the history of the nation-state yet still manages to be contemporary and sees cultural products as bearing distinctive qualities. People define countries other than their own on the basis of the cultural products they produce. In other words, most of the assessments we make about countries are based on general notions formulated with regard to the cultural products generated by them. For example, when someone who has never been to France hears the words “France” or “French,” the ideas they invoke will be derived from the notions planted in their minds by French cultural products in relation to their experience. National products of culture make a statement about the nation itself; to put it another way, the lies that people say about themselves are one and the same with the statements that nation-states make about themselves through their cultural products. Just as individuals sculpt their selves through statements, using them like clay and constructing their personas on the plane of discourse—in other words, *fabricating* them—countries

sculpt their national personalities through their cultural products and construct their discourses by means of those products, which they also use to fabricate national myths. In short, countries lie about themselves via the statements they make through cultural products. Like individuals, countries have to seek refuge in the fabrications they devise about themselves. Since economic control is secured within the scope of its own monopolies, the most unique and consistent formulations of such fabrications can only be realized within the bounds of the nation-state. Countries that define themselves through their cultural products are basically saying to other countries that experience those products, “Think of me in these terms.” The reason why this is the case is clear: National cultural products draw a share of a country’s personality, and the greater the number of unique individuals, the more unique the national culture; in following, national personality is shaped in a unique manner through national cultural products. We refer to the general ideas created by a given country’s national products, as well as the personality the country conveys and the persona it creates, as the Higher Persona. However, we should bear in mind that while every country has a Higher Persona, not every country is a nation-state. In other words, not all countries have gone through the process of nationalization. One prerequisite for nation-states is that they must be predicated on a national economy; the main issue at hand here concerns the degree of the uniqueness of the Higher Persona and the extent of control the country wields over cultural production. Since the most fitting environment for the emergence of fabrications and stories is the nation-state, Higher Personas are able to reach the pinnacle of their uniqueness in such settings. Individuals are in a constant state of flux, which is why Higher Personas, which are constituted on the basis of individuals, are mercurial as well. The Higher Persona is like a sculpture in continual motion that changes form in line with the outcomes of products, and they are reconstituted on a periodical basis by what we produce. That’s the reason why cultures around the world have undergone and continue to undergo processes of homogenization; countries that have let global capital sweep up the economies of their infrastructure forfeit their uniqueness in the cultural shaping of their superstructure. In such situations, countries are unable to narrate their own stories because capital forces them to tell the stories it wants them to tell.

If the discussion thus far were to be exemplified through the case of cities, we could say the following: Every city produces rhetoric. Large cities in particular speak to the people whom they take into their fold. When we wander the streets of another country, we only really experience one aspect of that country’s Higher Persona. We first get an impression of the city by way of our senses and then we develop ideas about it. If the city has been shaped under the hands of the country at large, we will be obliged to think about the national personality that the country wants us to envisage. If we were wandering around Paris and a French person tried to plant certain words in our thoughts, we would get caught up in those terms during the course of our travels and the concepts therein would seep into our minds. The rhetoric and myths of cities are created through their literature, cinema, art, and architecture, and through our experiences of those productions we would thus begin to discern a French Higher Persona, and as we ventured to other parts of France, we would be able to conceptualize that Higher Persona in a more comprehensive manner. Exposure to such cultural products is what would drive us to speak of concepts pertaining to France or Frenchness and, of course, media outlets continually disseminate that process far and wide. In actuality, the shaping of the Higher Persona attains a state of omnipresence by means of the media. Paris is beautiful and its rhetoric is exciting. The city of Budapest is beautiful as well, but it is not sufficiently unique precisely because it has not been able to acquire enough freedom. Throughout history, control of the Budapest’s infrastructure has changed hands numerous times as different countries took over and the focus of its rhetoric has regressed. In peripheral countries that revolve around countries that hold a central position, the cultural imagery of whoever controls the economy tends to be adopted. Paris is unique while Budapest is not, and Istanbul, unfortunately, is like a letter penned by someone suffering from schizophrenia. A jaunt through the streets of Istanbul is

sufficient to reveal that all control of the infrastructure has been lost and that the superstructure bears nothing but imitations of the stories of others. While the Süleymaniye Mosque is closer to our roots, the Valide Sultan Mosque is bereft of all uniqueness, largely because by 1871, when construction of the mosque was completed, nothing remained of the country’s economic freedom. A culture that cannot narrate its own stories seeks out immortality in the narrations of others. The corpses of states are slow to cool; for instance, the Ottoman state basically perished in the year 1700, but it took 223 years for the death certificate to be written up. When countries are no longer able to produce stories, it means that death is drawing near. For example, the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 represented an effort to create a story through a sense of modernity based on our culture by way of establishing a national economy, but our storytelling began slowing down in the 1940s as Westernization replaced modernization and by the 1950s, it had come to a complete standstill. Since processes of cultural production involve countries making statements about themselves, we may find ourselves asking the following question: What happens when countries are not actively involved in cultural production? Such countries also have a Higher Persona, but that Higher Persona cannot be accessed through their definitions for the simple reason that they say nothing about themselves because they are not engaged in the production of cultural products. In such cases, that lacuna is filled by others. Put differently, if a country does not produce, others will step in to make statements about it, and ultimately it is the non-producing country that gives them the opportunity to do so. And when that happens, it is no longer even possible to say that the people of that nation constitute a country as a whole, as nations that become cut off from the process of labor lose their national qualities. A country that does not define itself through production—in other words, a nation that does not shape its personality by means of unique cultural products—forces itself into a position in which it will be defined by others. If national character is not defined through cultural products, every single one of which represents a statement, and if others are not told, “Think of me in these terms” through national actions and products, then those others will develop notions about that country on their own. Orientalism came into being through such processes. In the end, Orientalism, which involves seeing the East through the lens of the West, is the natural outcome of the East being so mired in inertia that it cannot produce its own framework of perceptions.

A country that is able to produce a national Higher Persona within the parameters of its own uniqueness increases its national *cultural mass*. In a manner that is similar to how the Higher Persona resembles a sculpture that changes form in line with human actions and production, cultural mass is also mutable, and as the Higher Persona becomes increasingly unique, cultural mass increases. When a country increases its cultural mass on the basis of the level of uniqueness it has attained, it further warps its cultural grounding, and as a consequence it draws towards itself countries that have not acquired an equal amount of cultural mass. Such situations represent turning points in the center-periphery relationships of cultural grounding. The sole aim of countries that occupy a central position is to ensure that nearby countries do not increase their cultural mass; in other words, they try to prevent other countries from increasing the independence of their infrastructure. To give a concrete example of this, if the Moon were granted the will to increase its mass and subsequently did so, it would likely turn the Earth into *its* satellite. Countries that increase their cultural mass and uniqueness are able to cast off their dependence on the center, and their level of uniqueness grows in proportion to the extent to which they become independent of the center. If we define culture in the broadest sense as encapsulating everything that a given society produces, it becomes readily apparent that the shaping of the Higher Persona is not restricted solely to the realm of philosophy, art, or science. The Higher Persona comes into being through every aspect of life, including lifestyles, architectural styles, cinema, painting, football training schools, national academia, the culinary arts, design trends in perfume, fashion, and accessories—in short, the entirety of life. Since the Higher Persona arises from every dimension of culture, it is impossible to confine it to a certain category. Taken up from that

perspective, we can see that cultural productions such as Sancaklar Mosque and a unique Turkish film carry out the same function. All the people who live within the borders of a given country are the sculptors of the same sculpture, and the Higher Persona is shaped through such actions and productions. During the course of those processes, the contributions of the individual increase in proportion to the level of uniqueness that is achieved. Like countries, individuals are the sum total of the paths they trod. Regardless of the field he takes up, whether it be science, philosophy, art, or otherwise, when a productive individual endowed with a rich imagination creates a universe in his mind, he conveys that universe to others by way of the medium in which he feels that he is proficient (such as painting, photography, music, architecture, moving images, and so on). In doing so, he imbues the resultant product, which draws a share of his personality, with all of the political, economic, and historical residue that has accumulated in the country in which he resides. If the individual happens to be unique, he carries out that process of imbue in a way that transcends entrenched patterns, engaging in production in accordance with his own particular style in an idiosyncratic manner. The crucial issue here is that cultural progress must be continual and free of points of rupture, as that principle of continuity is the grounding that constitutes the style that reflects national character.

If a society has experienced major linguistic ruptures and cannot understand texts that were written a century earlier, it will not be able to contribute to forms of cultural progress that are based on consistency and continuity.¹ Put succinctly, a uniqueness that does not have a solid command of its own language cannot engage in construction, the consequences of which are a lack of a defining style and the imitation of styles that have been formulated in countries that occupy a central position. If we consider the discussion thus far in terms of national cinematic production, it could be argued that Turkish cinema has not fully developed a national character because of the points of rupture that have occurred in the country's cultural continuity and the fact that images have historically never been a principal means of conveying ideas in Turkey. It should be noted, however, that the issue of bolstering national Turkish cinema cannot be resolved solely within the field of cinema itself, as the other fields that nurture cinematic production, in particular literature and philosophy, need to be shored up as well. In recent times, however, a number of promising "sculptors" have emerged in the field. A number of Turkish directors such as Zeki Demirkubuz, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Tolga Karaçelik, Erdem Tepegöz, Emin Alper, Pelin Esmer, Onur Ünlü, and Yeşim Ustaoglu have turned their attention to the problems Turkey is facing. Through the production of works that take up those problems with an inside perspective, those directors have made major contributions to the creation of a body of national imagery and the sculpting of a Higher Persona that perches on the pinnacle of all cultural products. Still, in order for progress to continue, such people and works must go beyond individual success and become part of a trend of growth that is institutional in nature. When the issue at hand is assessed in terms of works absorbing a share of the personas of their creators, we can see that the field of cinema exists at a rather complex crossroads. The primary reason for this state of affairs is that the production of films involves a far more elaborate process than that of the majority of the other arts, which raises the following question: From whom do these complex cultural products draw a share? Cinema does not have a singular Demiurge; rather, there are two important Demiurges that facilitate the drawing of shares and occupy the upper echelons of this ranking: The director and the scriptwriter. Ideally, these two Demiurges would converge in the same person, as the labor that goes into the transfer of that which is expressed on the linguistic plane to the field of moving imagery could thus be controlled in the most effective manner possible. However, yet again we find ourselves faced with an obstacle that blocks the way to the

emergence of our stories. In the case of Istanbul, the populace simply has no stories left to tell, as they have been taken captive by the bustling city and they are unable to spend any time alone with themselves. Having lost their stories in the urban rush and tumult, they cannot stop to think because they are constantly hurrying and hence incapable of communing with themselves; consequentially, they cannot construct their selves on a linguistic level, nor can they write new stories by pausing to dwell on at least one of the fields associated with philosophy, art, or science. As a result of all that turmoil, reflection withers away and the advance of civilization starts to grind to a halt. In *The Philosophy of History*, G.W.F. Hegel contends that humankind cannot develop in extreme environmental conditions:

In the extreme zones man cannot come to free movement; cold and heat are here too powerful to allow Spirit to build up a world for *itself*. Aristotle said long ago, "When pressing needs are satisfied, man turns to the general and more elevated." But in the extreme zones such pressure may be said never to cease, never to be warded off; men are constantly impelled to direct attention to nature, to the glowing rays of the sun, and the icy frost. The true theatre of History is therefore the temperate zone... (Hegel, 2001: 97)

In regions where the struggle between people and nature reaches extremes, progress is impossible because basic human needs cannot be met. In the case of Istanbul, a synthetic human-urban struggle has been created, as a result of which people have been buried under a mountain of pressing needs that can never be fulfilled. And if we define reactionism as the sum total of obstacles to the realization of humanitarian freedom, it could be argued that the synthetic human-urban conflict that has been forged in Istanbul has turned the city into the most reactionary place in Turkey. As a result, this city, which is losing its own stories, has given rise to a populace that has no stories of its own to tell. Thus, the contributions that Istanbulites are making to the process of driving forward the uniqueness of our Higher Persona are occurring on a much smaller scale than they should be. As Istanbul loses its rhetoric, the city is killing the existing content by stripping it of its narratives. As was noted above with regard to how the solution to the issues plaguing our national cinema isn't just situated within the domain of cinema itself but also in the progression of other fields, particularly literature and philosophy, the solutions for Istanbul's problems can be found both within and outside the city. Ultimately, it would be far easier to increase the contemporary uniqueness of our Higher Persona, which spans all of our cultural products, on the scale of Anatolia. The lands of Anatolia have such a rich past as well as so much cultural diversity and accretion that they could accommodate a wide range of stylistic variations. Rendering the Higher Persona unique by starting off from Anatolia with a contemporary outlook could be one means of securing the salvation of Istanbul. And if the inhabitants of Istanbul were able to write stories once again, they could contribute to an increase in the uniqueness of the Higher Persona through national cinema. Turkey's unique creators, who would be capable of communing with themselves and producing contemporary products that suit the conditions of the current century by drawing on the entirety of their cultural accretions, would become the greatest sculptors of our Higher Persona.

CONCLUSION

This study, the primary aim of which was to propose the concept of the Higher Persona, takes up that notion within the framework of the problem of uniqueness and adopts six hypotheses as a means of driving the theory forward. Those hypotheses are based on the contention that the only way to solve the problem of uniqueness at the national level is to first resolve the problem of individual uniqueness. It is also argued here that the Higher Persona can only achieve the pinnacle of uniqueness within the bounds of the nation-state and that unique works absorb a share of both the producer's personality and original character. The first section of this study put forward the notion that all answers are conveyed through stories, contending that we obtain the answers we seek through such narrations regardless of whether they are constituted within the framework of philosophy, science, or religion, and examples were given to elaborate on that

¹Every year for a period of ten years I have been asking the students in my classes if they can define the Turkish word *şüheda*, which means "martyrs" (in the plural). Although they have probably heard the word time and time again since they were around seven years old, to date no more than ten students have been able to give the correct definition.

point. The second section explored Hume's proposition that since the universe is unknowable and cannot be pinned down to certain parameters, the best approach is to take action by way of seeking sanctuary in the most probable outcomes. While this study adopted that view, it also rejected Hume's refusal to offer up solutions. We asserted that in order to go on in life, efforts must be made to engage in the act of fabrication in the most sincere manner possible instead of simply remaining indifferent to the unknown. Intrinsically speaking, the issue of the unknown encapsulates the very essence of humankind. As such, that essence which cannot be grasped solely by the intellect must be fabricated and constructed. The third section of this study focused on the economic structure of nation-states, first offering up an explanation of the rise of nation-states through economic transformations and then going on to discuss the underlying tenets of the Higher Persona. The concept of the Higher Persona as proposed here can be defined in brief as the general ideas that are created through the cultural products that every country produces. Given that situation, it becomes immediately apparent that the uniqueness of a country's general ideas are intimately bound up with individual uniqueness. We contended that when there is an increase in the number of people who raise their levels of uniqueness after overcoming obstacles to their individual freedom, there is a concomitant increase in the degree of the uniqueness of the general ideas of countries. This section also explored the issue of the formulation of the Higher Persona through national cinema and provided a discussion of those directors who in recent times have been held up as significant "sculptors" involved in the shaping of Turkey's Higher Persona. In addition, the argument was made that the problems of national cinema cannot be resolved solely within the field of cinema itself.

Pending sufficient good fortune, the concept of the Higher Persona may be deemed important enough to stir up objections. One such objection could involve the interrogation of the validity of a concept that is deeply rooted in the nation-state at a time when capital has become so widely globalized. While it is inevitable that nation-states will come under threat in today's world of globalized capital, that state of affairs actually explains the stripping away of personality that has been taking place all around the world. Capital, which has taken control of the infrastructure of countries across the globe, represents the biggest impediment to the development of uniqueness at the level of countries' superstructure. The concept of the Higher Persona partly arose through that state of imbalance. The second driving force behind the emergence of the notion of the Higher Persona has had even more of impact on our current state. It has been observed that our lack of a unique style at the national level can be directly traced to our lack of control over our infrastructure. Of course, absolute independence cannot exist at the level of the state in an era of global capital. Nonetheless, the primary goal of any nation-state is to achieve independence to the greatest extent possible, and a key issue in that regard is the development of a national industry. In the last twenty-five years, Turkey has managed to accumulate a certain amount of national capital, but that has occurred at the cost of the destruction of the country's natural environment. On that point, it should be noted that growth and progress are not the same thing. Growth occurs when wealth increases, but that can only be transformed into progress through the development of a national industry. Accumulating capital is the easy part; the truly challenging task involves converting that capital into a national industry by way of proficient national human resources. That becomes possible when national academics produce graduates who have the skills needed to develop a given country's industrial base. If we consider the problems facing academia in Turkey, it becomes readily apparent that there are major obstacles impeding the transformation of national capital into a national industry. As history has demonstrated, capital that has grown without being funneled into industry will produce no results aside from class divisions. It could be argued that if a positive transformation were to occur in that regard, as a country that has taken greater control of its infrastructure we would be able to produce works endowed with more uniqueness at the level of the superstructure and as a natural consequence of that development we would be able to shape our national Higher Persona in a way that would render it more unique.

Throughout that process, national cinema would take its own share of such a transformation. A national cinema that has acquired its own particular uniqueness will no longer be driven to imitate that of others. Another critique could arise if the concept of the Higher Persona were taken up with a modernist-postmodernist framework. The concept is distinctly modernist in its formulation and that could be seen as an anachronistic problem. At the same time, however, the theorists who constructed postmodernism are one and the same with those who tore down the very modernism they established. As for the people of Turkey, they did not play a role in the construction of modernism or postmodernism. Aside from the few earnest steps that were taken during a period of time spanning 1923 to 1938, Turkish national modernism has never been taken up as a problem of infrastructure. In order to move on to the stage of postmodernism within the scope of our own unique conditions, it would be necessary to first experience modernism as steeped in our own form of uniqueness. Indeed, the concept of the Higher Persona came into being as a result of that belated need for modernism. Lastly, it should be noted that this academic study is itself a story fabricated by the author with an eye to achieving the greatest degree of consistency afforded by his abilities. If this fabricated Higher Persona encounters even more competent and consistent fabrications that may arise as a reaction to its postulated existence, it will have made, at the very least in this respect, a contribution to national academia.

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Key Points: Cultural products are the self-statements of nations. Through creating unique cultural products, nations define themselves, which show why they are different from other nations. By doing so they position themselves differently that also leads to uniqueness. In addition to that, uniqueness can only be established by having a free country, in other words being a free economy. Being free in infrastructural level means having more chance of being a free person which is the most suitable conditions for creating unique cultural products.

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