Samuel Ramos
“Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico”
Samuel Ramos (1897-1959)

- Mexican philosopher and thinker, was Professor of aesthetics and history of philosophy in the University of Mexico. His thinking is strongly influenced by the philosophy of values, and Ortega y Gasset. He was part of the group called "Hyperion", and also began a movement that aims to research the "Mexican soul", and a return to indigenous values.

El Grupo Hiperión/The Hyperion Group at the Colegio de México

- Leopoldo Zea, Octavio Paz, José Luis Gonzáles, José Gaos, and Samuel Ramos
Mexico: An “Abused” Heritage

- Ramos called “Mexican Europeanism” the original sin.

- The adaptation of European ideas was non-selective because there were no standards employed to discriminate between the spiritually useful and imitative.

- This lack of selectivity was largely driven by a failure to understand the historical and lived reality of Mexico and an idealized interest in all things European.

The Goal:

- National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)

- To Draw a Profile of a Culture That Could Exist in Mexico

- “The prevailing culture – present or future – is necessarily that which determines vocation of the race and its historical destiny.” (p.281)

- This culture must be organic – blending the historical reality, the spiritual needs, and the life of the Mexican
To Avoid a False Mexican Nationalism

- The Mexican Culture cannot be founded out of selective amnesia— as if certain periods of history never happened
- It also can’t be constructed in isolation from the world or without reference to how world events have impacted Mexico
- “But this Mexico of the charro and the Mexico of the china poblana, as well as the Mexico of the legendary savage, constitute a Mexico for export which is just as false as the romantic Spain of the tambourine.” (p.282)


China Poblana, Foto: Archivo El Universal
http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/889322.html
On Resentment & an Inferiority Complex

- Ramos was significantly influenced by Alfred Adler, psychiatrist whose influential system of individual psychology introduced the term “inferiority feeling”
Alfred Adler – Individual Psychology & Inferiority

- Adler’s “Individual psychology maintains that the overriding motivation in most people is a striving for what Adler somewhat misleadingly termed superiority (i.e., self-realization, completeness, or perfection). This striving for superiority may be frustrated by feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, or incompleteness. Individuals can compensate for their feelings of inferiority by developing their skills and abilities, or, less healthily, they may develop an inferiority complex that comes to dominate their behaviour. Overcompensation for inferiority feelings can take the form of an egocentric striving for power and self-aggrandizing behaviour at others’ expense.”

Each person develops his personality and strives for perfection in his own particular way, in what Adler termed a style of life, or lifestyle....The striving for superiority coexists with another innate urge: to cooperate and work with other people for the common good, a drive that Adler termed the social interest. Mental health is characterized by reason, social interest, and self-transcendence...."
On Resentment & an Inferiority Complex

“But if we can rid our nationalistic spirit of all its resentment against things foreign (the kind of resentment which is typical in those suffering from an inferiority complex), there will undoubtedly remain a moral substance of absolute value for Mexico. This will be the voice of our most authentic being....” (p.282)
On Resentment & an Inferiority Complex

- “Mexicans have not lived naturally; their history has always lacked candor....” (p.282)
- “We must have the courage to be ourselves and the humility to accept the life that fate bestowed upon us without being ashamed of its poverty.” (ibid.)
- “…we have chosen to feign a situation which is very superior to that in which we actually live. Many of the sufferings which now afflict us will disappear the day we cure ourselves of our vanity.” (ibid.)
On Introspection and Self-Knowledge

- It cannot be superficial; It has to be rigorous, in-depth and objective.
- It must be driven by a great “passion for truth” (Nietzsche) and a “love of knowledge” which will allow (force?) one to abandon the “little passions” of self-interest, vanity and self-deception.
- It will require a “merciless” moral and intellectual discipline.
On Mexican and Universal Science

“All scientific research is impracticable if it does not confront reality with a prejudgment….In a word, prejudgment is what within the medium of experience leads us to the scientific idea. But one cannot acquire these prejudgments without learning, before the actual investigation, the principles of the science in question.” (p.283)

- Diego Rivera's SF Mural: "Pan American Unity" City College of San Francisco's Diego Rivera Theatre
On Mexican and Universal Science

“Each spirit needs for its development the support and stimulus of a universal culture. It is therefore evident that the good intention of examining Mexican conscience may come to naught if we isolate it from the outside world, closing our doors to every possible foreign influence, for then we shall be left in the dark.” (p.284)

- Diego Rivera's SF Mural: "Pan American Unity” City College of San Francisco's Diego Rivera Theatre
“In the future Mexico must have a Mexican culture, but we have no illusions about its being original or unique. By Mexican culture we mean universal culture made over into our own, the kind that can coexist with us and appropriately express our spirit.” (p.285)
Historicity and Perspectivism

- Ramos was also significantly influenced by the work of the Spaniard, José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955)
Historicity and Perspectivism

“Critical philosophy of history thus refers to the position that characterizes the world we know and in which we act as a product of human activity and mind. Accordingly, Ortega represented the “modern” reflective thinker who approached history from philosophy, and whose theories of history as a source of human knowledge have epitomized the tendency to connect concepts of historical temporality and mind. He challenged positivistic approaches to history and contributed an important aspect to the modern concept of history: the tenet that there is a connectedness and a meaning in human history which emanates from a principle of continuity inherent in individual human lives.”

http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/gasset/
Historicity and Perspectivism

- “I am I and my circumstances.” (Obras, 6: 347)
- “...every life is a point of view directed upon the universe” (Obras, 3: 200)
- “I hope, for very concrete reasons, that in our age the curiosity for the eternal and invariable which is philosophy and the curiosity for the inconstant and changeable which is history, for the first time join each other and embrace” (Obras, 7: 285)
Ramos On Education:

“To give substance to our spiritual work of the future, it will be necessary to prepare our young people in schools and universities by means of an austere program basically oriented toward discipline of the will and intelligence.” (p.285)
“It is therefore essential to approach our problem in that modern spirit by which reiteration has become trite: to relate culture to life. As far as scientific knowledge is concerned, it is necessary to correlate continually the study of universal scientific principles with a specific analysis of our own reality.” (p.285)
Ramos On Education:

“*When this is achieved, it will be possible to show that even those who reach the highest pinnacles of spiritual life need not, in their haughtiness, succumb to the error of rejecting native values.*” (ibid.)