

Injustice and the Intellectual in José Rizal's *Noli Me Tángere*

Kenneth Andrew Andres Leonardo

Visiting Assistant Professor of Government

Hamilton College, Clinton, NY

kaleonar@hamilton.edu

Abstract

José Rizal is not a widely known figure in the academy today and if he is acknowledged, it is for his criticism of Spanish colonial rule in the Philippines. The dissemination of his two subversive novels, *Noli Me Tángere* and *El Filibusterismo*, helped to galvanize Philippine nationalism. Although he had a considerable depth of knowledge, scholars have not adequately investigated Rizal's works or properly respected Rizal as a political thinker. Most recent Western scholarship is limited to either literary criticism or to perspectives of his historical impact during Spanish colonialism. Moreover, there are issues with the Philippine scholarship on Rizal because many writings approach the category of hagiography. Although some scholars have acknowledged the influence of French and other European Enlightenment sources on Rizal's work, he was also influenced by ancient Greek and Latin sources. In this paper, I investigate Rizal's references to ancient and medieval political thought in *Noli Me Tángere*. This analysis provides a more complete understanding of how Rizal saw the role of the intellectual when confronted with injustice and corruption. Furthermore, I contend that Rizal is confronting classical difficulties regarding the relationship between the educated, the philosopher, and the political community. Still, a comparison should be made with the notion of the "colonized intellectual." A serious examination of Rizal's works and his own life will be crucial to understanding Rizal's place in the global history of political thought.

Keywords

injustice, intellectual, revolution, nonviolence

Note: This conference paper is not intended for wide public circulation. Please contact the author directly if you would like a copy of the file.