

WINDBOITEL, LADISLAW (1644-1701). Born, raised, and educated by correspondence in the obscure Serbian village of Bod, Windboitel lived an uneventful life entirely indoors. He was stigmatized by his parents' public confession of atheism, and so regularly ridiculed in the local press that he felt compelled to carry out his philosophical and scientific work in secret, using elaborate codes. He assiduously destroyed all his writings at the end of each lunar month. What little we once had directly from his hand, therefore, especially since he died five days into a cycle, was a mere fragment of ethical theory, together with the codebooks. But from these meager materials, the otherwise unremarkable Remo Vincente (1841-1849) produced the massive four-volume Ladislaviana (Leipzig, 1849), a reconstruction from the existing texts of Windboitel's entire ethical theory. Problems of authorship aside, the views articulated in the Lad, as it is popularly known, have invariably been ascribed to Windboitel, and their influence on subsequent ethical theory (nil) has been attributed to him also.

Briefly put, Windboitel held that all physical motion was governed by a single ineffable natural law, from which nothing concerning ethics could be derived. Similarly, all human conduct was governed by a single moral law, simple and indefinable. Windboitel arrived at this position inductively, by considering all ten of the natural and moral laws he had encountered during his studies. He found that each of them was dubitable, yet his own body and moral convictions remained unshaken. Such stability in the physical and

moral realms would not be possible, he reasoned, without an indubitable foundation of principle or law. Hence such laws exist. (Lad, IV, 23.) And since the only evidence he could conceive for the unstability of such laws was the fact that people had not succeeded in stating them, he concluded that they were ineffable.

By consulting his intuitions, however, Windboitel was able to deduce a truly breathtaking array of moral judgements. Many of them are of interest only to Bodites, but enough are of universal application to make the Lad a continuous and intense source of pleasure to eight-year olds. Three volumes are devoted to dealing with unruly parents.

It is the fourth volume, however, which holds the most promise for further study by moral philosophers. This part of the work (which was issued as volume I of the Leipzig edition, as volume III of most subsequent editions, and is cited as "the fourth volume by all commentators) contains many cryptic but profound passages, such as the famous "hoc ergo illud," a perfectly general principle of inference which greatly simplifies philosophic argument. It could be of significant use to intuitionist in establishing the existence of moral laws from the existence of stable intuitions. The faint echoes of Windboitel's views in Mill and Moore, who evidently were not even acquainted with the Lad, are final testaments to their power.

Works by Ladislav Windboitel

Windboitel, Ladislav. Ladislaviana, Bände I-IV.

Leipzig: Notter Verlag, 1849. The original German edition, as first prepared by Remo Vincente from Windboitel's final two-page fragment, now lost.

Windboitel, Ladislav. Ladislaviana . London: Roundly Press, no date. The standard nursery book edition, since translated into forty languages. It is through this work that most readers have become familiar with Windboitel, but the text does not contain the important fourth volume.

Windboitel, Ladislav. The Fourth Volume: A Critical Edition in English . Translated and annotation by Remy Vincent. New York: Fugitive Press, 1923.

Works about Ladislav Windboitel

The Remo Vincente Family Foundation. The Legacy of Ladislaviana . New Haven: Independence Press, 1952. Anthology of 40 articles on Windboitel, including both literary criticism and philosophical analysis.

Vice, Remington. The Ethical Theory of Ladislav Windboitel . New Haven: Independence Press, 1987. The only book-length philosophical study of Windboitel's ethics. Includes exhaustive bibliography of articles and monographs on Windboitel.

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