

# **Coduction and the Incommensurability of Values**

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## Coduction and the Incommensurability of Values

*My concern is with a befouled rhetorical climate which prevents our meeting to discover and pursue common interests.*

—Wayne Booth (1974a, 99)

I have a rather unexceptional argument about incommensurability of values and Wayne Booth's rhetorical project, particularly his critical instrument, coduction. Roughly, I am arguing that coduction solves incommensurability of values. It is *roughly*, because I would like to dispose of incommensurability of values altogether. My claims are

1. that the notion of incommensurability of values is pernicious, because it raises in-principle obstacles to the resolution of disputes over values, at least over some values, and
2. that coduction is a solution to the cluster of problems often saddled with the incommensurability

My case against the incommensurability of values topos is philological. I argue that the concept of incommensurability, which has a precise technical definition in mathematics, has been distorted analogically into an unbridgeable chasm outside of mathematics, and has in turn distorted the discourse of values into one where reasoned argumentation and earnest bridge-making is pointless. I also seek to disengage the incommensurability topos from pluralism, and to expose the self-negation in the repudiation of scalar assessment by the value incommensurabilists.

My case for coduction, as a solution to the sorts of difficult conflicts of value that lead to declarations of incommensurability, is analytic. I examine coduction as a style of reasoning with characteristic methodological, teleological, and ideological features that make it particularly suited to discourse pivoting on values.

## Incommensurability of Values

*Rhetoric, I shall urge, should be a study of misunderstanding.*

—I. A. Richards (1936, 3)

The word *incommensurability*, along with its adjective, *incommensurable*, operates principally in three domains, mathematics, science studies, and ethics (Harris 2005). It comes to the same thing in all three domains, with greatly decreasing precision, and greatly increasing horror. "Those magnitudes are said to be *commensurable* which are measured by the same measure," as Euclid puts it for mathematics, "and those *incommensurable* which cannot have any common measure" (*Elements* X.1). So, the magnitudes 4 and 6 are commensurable, since they can both be plumbed by way of 2, which goes into 4 twice, 6 thrice; the magnitudes 4 and  $\pi$  are incommensurable, since there is no mutually plumbing number, nothing which divides into both of them (except for the special-case exceptions, 0, 1, and  $\infty$ ): no common measure. This mathematical use sponsors the word in the other two domains both of which use *incommensurability* analogically.

In science studies, the core analogy goes: "neutral algorithm" is to "theory" as "common measure" is to "number" (Kuhn 1996, 200). There is no mechanism unsaturated by theory that can be used to take the measure of two theories. Hence rival theories—say, Copernican cosmology and Ptolemaic cosmology—cannot strictly be compared. In ethics, the most natural construal is "common unit" to "value" as "common measure" to "number." There is no conceivable unit by which some values—say, liberty and equality—can be charted and compared. As this is often put, there is no common scale of values. Just as in mathematics only some numbers are mutually incommensurable, in science studies and in ethics, the claims are not that all theories or all values are mutually incommensurable, simply that some are.<sup>1</sup>

*Here beginneth the philology.*

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<sup>1</sup> The words are also in play throughout ordinary language, of course, though usually in somewhat elevated contexts; indeed, many of their appearances in academic discourse are of this ordinary-language variety. Here, too, the usage is analogic, but in an even looser way.

The word *incommensurable* entered English, as best the records show, with the 1570 Billingsley translation of Euclid's *Elements*. Billingsley adopted the Latin transliteration of *asummetra* common in Medieval mathematics, rather than moving more fully into English, with, for instance, an Anglo-Norman term like *unmeasurable*. The word was brought in, that is, as a technical term, deliberately removed from ordinary language, which is still its anchoring function.

The analogic extension, as best the records show, makes its first appearance in the early seventeenth century, where its sense is far removed from merely 'unmeasurable.' It is more on the order of 'ineffable.' This first usage is, notably, connected to the discourse of values.<sup>2</sup>

By the nineteenth century, the term was common academic currency, with the hypertrophied semantics of unbridgeable divides. "[O]at-cake and honesty are incommensurable," Charles S. Devas writes in 1899, "vice in a horse and vice in a man differ in kind" (1899, 43). In the early twentieth century, American pluralists took the topic up, particularly in their opposition to utilitarianism. This is Henry Waldgrave Stuart, a student of John Dewey's, summing up Dewey's position:

The ends in an ethical situation are ... incompatible, discrepant, heterogeneous, opposed, ... They get in each other's way; they cannot readily be measured and chosen, one as against the others, because no common denominator can be found in terms of which to express their relative worth. In ethical situations, that is to say, the rival ends toward which the individual finds himself attracted are found to be incommensurable (Stuart 1939, 298-299; also 301, 311).

The pluralists took the debate—or, in any case, were the last ones standing around the conference water coolers when incommensurabilist talk petered out in the 1940s—and it was forgotten.

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<sup>2</sup> See George Wilkins, *Three miseries of Barbary: plague, famine, ciuill warre*, wherein he implores his readers to acknowledge the "incommensurable loue and mercy" God shows for

But in 1969, Isaiah Berlin published a collection of essays, *Four Essays on Liberty*, foregrounding the relationship between value incommensurability and ethical pluralism. There is now a sizable current literature on the special topos, incommensurability of values, dating itself from Berlin's collection and apparently oblivious to these earlier discussions, as Berlin himself professed to be.<sup>3</sup>

Berlin's driving concern might be better summed up, however, as the *repulsion* of values. His test cases were of certain specific ideal values, which repelled each other completely:

Liberty ... is an eternal human ideal, whether individual or social. So is equality. But perfect liberty (as it must be in the perfect world) is not compatible with perfect equality. If man is free to do anything he chooses, then the strong will crush the weak, the wolves will eat the sheep, and this puts an end to equality. If perfect equality is to be attained, then men must be prevented from outdistancing each other, whether in material or intellectual or spiritual achievement, otherwise inequalities will result. ... Similarly, a world of perfect justice—and who can deny that this is one of the noblest of human values?—is not compatible with perfect mercy. I need not labor the point: either the law takes its toll, or men forgive, but the two values cannot both be realised. (Berlin 1998, 60)<sup>4</sup>

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England, despite its wickedness. There are no page numbers, or they aren't preserved on my source, the copy in Early English Books Online—the passage cited is on image 14.

<sup>3</sup> "I do not know who else may have thought this," he remarked in the last essay he wrote before his death (1998, 60). For some discussion, see Harris (2005, 67, 143n56).

<sup>4</sup> More germane than these sorts of specific, individual ideal value clashes—germane in light of the issues that animate Booth's work on values, and in light of the wholesale conflicts we see around us daily—is Berlin's discussion of value frameworks, as in his juxtaposition of Classical and Christian values:

[The classical framework was based on the virtues] of courage, vigor, fortitude in adversity, public achievement, order, discipline, happiness, strength, justice, above all assertion of one's proper claims and the knowledge and power needed to secure their satisfaction [conflicts with the Christian framework based on the virtues of] charity, mercy, sacrifice, love of God, forgiveness of enemies, contempt for the goods of this world, faith in the life hereafter, belief in the

Where is the original analogical hook in all of this? —The lack of a single "infallible measuring rod" (Berlin 1972) with which to choose, when exigencies press, between liberty and equality, justice and mercy. There is no common scale which allows us to put one clashing value in a dish on one side, the other in the dish on the opposite side, and weight them against each other.

But it is precisely the concern with such quick-fix instruments as a "common denominator" or an "infallible measuring rod" in the discourse on values that is the heart of the problem. It befouls the rhetorical climate. And, of course, the very word, *incommensurable*, is the nexus of this concern.

*Incommensurable*, by its very essence, coded in the *in ... able* morphological tandem, is a word of foreclosure (as we see in stable mates like *impossible*, *inaccessible*, *inevitable*, *ineluctable*, ...). Denotatively, it forecloses common measurement. That is a bad move, a pernicious move even, in clashes of any consequence. It is an abandonment of rhetoric. Worse, its origins in mathematics connote both a precision that does not obtain of non-numerical values, and a charisma of certainty that undermines the very notion of pluralism it is held to attend. Even the converse, talking about commensurability of values, as some scholars would like to do, commits the same sin. *Commensurability* is certainly more attractive denotatively, since it is not an absolute negation, since there is no foreclosure. But connotatively the problems remain: the implications of precision and certainty, which can only lead to frustration in matters of serious conflict.

*Here endeth the philology.*

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salvation of the individual soul as being of incomparable value -- higher than, indeed, wholly incommensurable with, any social or political or other terrestrial goal. (Berlin, 1979, 45)

In this brief paper, I'm just going to pretend these aren't on the table, and, as my son used to say to me when he was pretending that something hadn't happened to avoid unpleasant consequences: "you pretend too." I don't think that there are unpleasant consequences—my argument applies to value frameworks as it does to individual values—just that the discussion would become unmanageably muddy in this context.

## Measuring value

*[Reasoning about values belongs to] the vast field of all that is not amenable to quantitative and formal techniques.*

—Chaim Perelman (1970, 310)

Wayne Booth was, we all know, a pluralist in the Dewey line. He was conversant with much of this incommensurability-of-values literature, and he was highly sympathetic towards it. He cites Berlin approvingly (2004, 120-121), for instance, and endorses Joseph Raz's "cogent demonstration [in *Morality of Freedom*, 1986] that irreducibly plural human values are necessarily 'incommensurable' and that preserving their plurality and incommensurability is itself a good" (1988, 222n14), and he was deeply appreciative of Eugene Garver's Aristotelian wrestling match with the incommensurability of values topos (Garver 1994, 65-73 *et passim*; Booth 1995, in which he calls Garver "Our Best Rhetorologist," the highest imaginable compliment in his repertoire; see, esp., 121).<sup>5</sup> We need to ask, "What's the attraction?" and "What's the problem?"

What's the attraction?

There is one corner of the problem of conflicting values that the incommensurability topos touches usefully upon, and that's the corner which is attractive for pluralists, including Booth, to set up shop: comparison and its problems. Berlin's progeny are preoccupied with the opacity of comparison, as they should be. Values can clash, and when significantly conflicting consequences follow for the respective value-holders from such clashes, the situation calls for comparison. Values, too, are often deeply entrenched, which makes mutually satisfactory comparison highly difficult. But *highly difficult* is not

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<sup>5</sup> He also cites Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and Bernard Williams, in late essays (2006 [1998], 349n6, 351n5), MacIntyre and Williams in *Rhetoric of Rhetoric* (2003, 65), as exemplars of moral theory influential to his own thought.

the same as *impossible*, and the value incommensurabilists use their key term as a door-slammer on many value comparisons (Griffin 1997, 35).

Measurement, of course, is a very narrow, but very precise, form of comparison. Incommensurability ultimately nullifies this sort of narrow, precise comparison, doing so with a morphological finality and multisyllabic bluntness that connote a more comprehensive and sweeping nullification of comparison. But we need to keep in mind that nothing of the sort obtains of the root mathematical metaphor. One can compare incommensurable numbers to almost limitless orders of precision. Take our friends 2 and  $\pi$ : 2 is 0.6366197723 of  $\pi$ , a degree of precision only limited here because my calculator doesn't go beyond ten decimal places. There is always a tiny amount of slippage when you're dealing with incommensurable numbers, but the comparison can be made precise enough for any and all practical purposes, from data encryption to building steel-girder bridges.

What's the problem?

The problem in general lies in the foreclosure of rhetoric implied by the illegitimate, or at least irresponsibly sloppy, way that value incommensurabilists bandy about their key term, raising theoretically insurmountable obstacles to resolving value clashes. That would only be a general problem for the accuracy and efficacy of ethics discourse, and not a specific problem for Booth if his lot really belonged with theirs. But he is not, at bottom, a value incommensurabilist. There is a serious incompatibility, a conceptual rift, between his rhetorical enterprise and his fondness for value incommensurability. I come down on the side of his rhetorical enterprise.

Booth's enterprise has two fundamental prongs, an ethical commitment, which goes by "the ugly neologism, *rhetorology*" (2002, 225), and a set of critical practices, which fall under another unlabeled coinage, *coduction*. He developed the practices in the course of working out a literary critical program, exemplified in works like *Rhetoric of Fiction* and *Company We Keep*, which investigates (and advocates) the building and rebuilding—the never-ending construction—of our individual characters through our encounters with literature. Booth also worked out, somewhat more loosely, a social program, exemplified in works like *Now Don't Try to Reason with Me*, and *Modern Dogma*, which pursues the same ends on a broader scale, the building and rebuilding of

our ethical culture—its never-ending construction—through our encounters with each other. His critical program foregrounds reader/author relations, through the mediation of narrative; his social program foregrounds person/society relations, through the mediation of conversation, argument, and public discourse. It is the social program that led him to articulate the rhetorological commitment: to systematically and charitably "probe for 'common ground' ... on the assumption—often disappointed—that disputants can be led into mutual understanding" (2004, 11). This commitment recognizes the prospect of disappointment, but it does not begin with an axiom of foreclosure.

Value incommensurability is inimical to one prong, rhetorology, and obstructive of the other, coduction. I realize the presumption in saying that Booth fails his own enterprise by embracing a concept which is corrosive to it. But if we held a séance and brought him back to hear my charge, I would begin (adding to my presumption) by quoting his own words back to him:

Everyone with even the slightest sophistication becomes a semanticist at least occasionally. If we hear two people quarreling about whether a board is seven yards or twenty-one feet long, we can all happily point out that they are both right, once their conclusions are related to their critical vocabulary. If someone then says that the board is really 6.4088 meters long, our semantic efforts may take a bit longer to reach their conclusions, but few will be trapped by the difficulties. Much critical warfare would disappear if this kind of elementary semantic resolution were habitual in working with critical terms (Booth 1979, 8)

"What is clear," I would quote him from a page later, "is that every dispute, whether real or invented, will require attention to such preliminary questions *if* the disputants hope to have anything to say to each other" (Booth 1979, 9). It is precisely this sort of attention I have paid to a crucial preliminary question in my philological excursus—not just semantic, but morphological and etymological attention—which reveals the incommensurability of values *topos* to be noxious; the very phrase, bringing mathematical precision to the domain of values, is an oxymoron. Unless Booth, that master casuist and situational ethicist, wants the faux exactitude and certainty and foreclosure of the root metaphor, he would have to join me in denouncing it.

He would, in short, be required to compare and to choose between rhetoricology and incommensurability of values. In my own comparison, rhetoricology wins hands down, in part because of its fundamental decency, in part because the alternative—taking up the dogma that value blockages can, in principle, be irremediable—is abhorrent. (I admit that they prove irremediable far too often *in practice*; hence, the disappointment. But that is not the same of as hanging the abandon-all-hope-ye-reasoners-who-enter-here sign of incommensurability over my door.)

That does not quite end the matter, however. Not everyone is a friend of philology. There are two remaining complications.

The first complication is the unfortunate coupling of incommensurability and pluralism. The topos seems to have developed in 19th century ethics as a stick with which to beat utilitarians, depicted as single-minded monists. But, leaving aside the game of utilitarian-bashing, which united pluralists hither and yon, there is nothing essential in the coupling of pluralism and incommensurability. Indeed, James Griffin dismisses "the mere plurality of values" as banal (1986, 91); one might have any number of values that bump against each other in ethical situations without calling in the extravagant language of foreclosure.

The second complication is the linkage, again stipulated, between value adjudication and scalar assessment. What value-incommensurabilists are at pains to deny is the presence of some über-scale for ranking and sifting through values. But we can deny the relevance of scalar assessment without throwing away the possibility of adjudication and choice. Scales may be fine for sensations, or, in any case, for their objective correlatives: sharpness, hardness, pressure, and so on. But as soon as we move on to perceptions, scales come to ruin. We can certainly say something is more pleasurable than something else, or more painful, even happier or sadder, than something else, and we can certainly rough out comparative estimates if called upon (twice as pleasurable as; half as painful as). But to pretend we can come up with a scale that works for all gustatory pleasure, let alone all pleasure, let alone all goods, is deeply misguided.

Dewey, indeed, says as much. "Moral equality means incommensurability," he insists, defining the predicate as "the inapplicability of common and quantitative standards" (Dewey 1993 [1922], 79), but notice how this definition works. Dewey does not say that, search as you may, a

common measure can't be found (i.e., the mathematical situation). He says that the whole notion of common measures is inapplicable here; quantitative standards don't belong in ethics. Commensurability is a non-starter. Therefore, incommensurability is simply, merely, utterly irrelevant. It has no purchase in the realm of values. The repudiation of common and quantitative standards, in fact, is a repudiation of the entire domain from which the incommensurability topos is drawn.

If there is pluralism without incommensurability, then, and adjudication without scalar assessment, where do we go to make choices in those moments of clashing values that make us despair over the lack of an über-calculus which, when the toting up and the carrying of numbers is all done, can tell us what to choose? Coduction.

## Coduction

... and its remedies.

—I.A. Richards

Coduction is the apotheosis of Boothian thought: an intellectually active—aggressive, even—social reasoning in and about an array of mutually challenging viewpoints, relying on credible evidence, on experience, on the character of ourselves and our interlocutors, and on our desire for ever-improving, never-closing understanding. Coduction typifies Booth's radically pluralist, but assuredly not relativist, mode of thought. Prototypically, coduction is a method of critically appraising texts, introduced in *The Company We Keep* as

what we do whenever we say to the world (or prepare ourselves to say): "Of the works of this general kind that I have experienced, *comparing my experience with more or less qualified observers*, this one seems to me among the better (or weaker) ones, or the best (or worst)" (1988 72).

For Booth, the appraisal of texts is a fundamentally ethical activity: texts project human agency; therefore attitudes, values, allegiances, antipathies; in a word, *moral* positions.

As the components of his coinage make clear, *coduction* is a style of *reasoning*. It happily works alongside deduction (a formal, pattern-driven, derivational style of reasoning) and induction (an

empirical, data-driven, generalizing, style of reasoning), but departs—methodologically, teleologically, and ideologically—in crucial ways from each of them.

Methodologically, it departs by defining an approach, an attitude, to reasoning, rather than a set of governing principles (Jost 2006, 13). It welcomes patterned reasoning, investigating consistency and its lack, following entailments, charting omissions, and the like. It welcomes empirical evidence, prizing especially the generalizations drawn from multiple experiences of the same text at different times, and of the same text by different experiencers, and of similar texts by all and sundry. But it is pluralistic, employing methods for their situational fruitfulness, not for their *a priori* sovereignty, and employing them, as needed, in concert, not in exclusion. The value incommensurabilists agree that we need an attitude rather than a method for dealing with clashes of values. James Griffin, for instance, defines Berlinian liberalism in very similar terms to Booth's methodological pluralism, articulating

a certain important picture of how [values] are related—that they clash, that they all matter, that they all have their day, that there are no permanent orderings or rankings among them, that life depressingly often ties gain in one value to terrible loss in another, that persons may go in very different directions and still lead equally valuable lives—call this picture 'liberalism.' (Griffin 1986, 91)

But the incommensurabilists, for all their virtues, draw a troubling conclusion from this picture, that comparisons of value are illegitimate, which is where Booth is obliged to bid them adieu.

Teleologically, coduction departs not only not only from our other -ductions, which disavow *teloi* altogether, but also from Berlinian liberalism, which rejects the specific *telos* that motivates coduction. Berlinian liberalism holds "that there are values that cannot be got on any scale, that they cannot even be compared as to 'greater,' 'less,' or 'equal'" (Griffin 1997, 35), a position wholly antithetical to Booth. The *goal* of coduction is comparison:

[T]he logic we depend on as we arrive at our particular appraisals is neither deduction from clear premises, even of the most complex kind, nor induction from a series of precisely defined and isolated instances. Rather it is always the result of a direct sense that something now before us has yielded an experience

that we find *comparatively* desirable, admirable, lovable or, on the other hand, comparatively repugnant, contemptible or hateful. (1988, 71)

Ideologically, coduction rejects the lone reasoner and the pursuit of closure. *Deduction* and *induction* are "pursuable in private," Booth tells us (2006, 252). Coduction is not. Coduction is carried out by people in negotiative relations through texts (in any media, oral, literate, visual, cinematic, what have you). Even in your office, with the door shut, you coduce only by entering into conversation with others through their texts, not by, in the deductive and inductive spirit, simply exploiting those texts for axioms and evidence. Our other -ductions, too, are inherently finalizing modes, meant to be "conducted by a private investigator and then laid out in full cogency to the world" (Booth 2006, 186). Large-scale value disputes, however, are immune to autonomous arguments, meant to serve up the last word and prevent, through full cogency, all further discussion. Such disputes are "inherently interminable," Booth points out, "not resolvable with either inductive or deductive reasoning but profitably continuable in the kind of conversation I have dubbed 'coduction'" (Booth 2006, 192).

These three departures from our other two -ductions—elevating stance above method, aiming always at comparisons, and rejecting the lone reasoner—make coduction a style of reasoning particularly suited to questions of value, which are precisely the sorts of questions over which those other -ductions fumble most dramatically. The whole basis of Hume's is-ought problem, for instance, rests on the inability to get, inductively or deductively, from what is to what ought to be done (or ought not to be done). This floundering over values, incidentally, highlights the oxymoronic nature of the phrase "incommensurability of values." Incommensurability, the mathematical prototype, lends itself to deductive reasoning, which is especially notorious for its impotence in the realm of values.

## Critical communion

*Reasonable men of differing interests, experience, and vocabulary will disagree about some questions to which reason, nevertheless, must apply. Consequently they not only can but must, by virtue of their common problems, search for meeting places where they can stand together and explore their differences about the choices life presents.*

—Wayne Booth (1974a, 111)

Criticism, T.S. Eliot, reminds us, "is a judgment, a comparison, in which two things are measured by each other" (1932 [1919], 16): *by each other*, not by some common denominator or infallible measuring rod. Coduction provides for this reciprocal, comparative adjudication. But the tricky business about it is that it can only proceed under conditions of—not *commensurability*, since the measuring-stick analogy is the root of the problem, but—*communion*.

I mean *communion* here in its ordinary language sense of an activity guided by the motive of unifying under a new perspective elements that are disparate under other perspectives. But there is no coincidence, I think, in the fact that rhetoricians operating with such a motive, like Burke and Perelman, deploy the word regularly throughout their work, with quasi-technical senses. Burke, in particular, uses it as a virtual synonym for *consubstantiality*, as when he contrasts the "essential difference in strategy" found between "communion by pulling others down to one's own level of misfortune ... and communion through attempts to establish human solidarity by salvaging what we can" (1974, 443; on Perelman, see Graff and Winn 2006). Booth is a rhetorician of the same stripe, and he uses the term regularly as well, nowhere more tellingly than in this passage from *Modern Dogma*: "If man is essentially a rhetorical animal, his essential human act is that of making himself into a self, in symbolic communion with his fellows" (1974a, 194).

Coduction, in short, is not a miracle cure. It takes hard work and good will. Nor are the results clear and univocal; they can't be, or it wouldn't continue, and continuity is one of its principal features. Still, it generates ranges possibilities for continuing communion, under varying degrees of confidence, which is a hell of a lot when contrasted with the alternatives. Nor does it provide a comfortable resolution. It helps to identify better and worse moves without infallibly solving the problem.

## Conclusion

*What do we share beneath our surface differences? Let us inquire together, in symbolic exchange. There is no other way except to eliminate differences by forceful domination.*

—Wayne Booth (2006, 330)

Booth was attracted to the incommensurability of values literature, and the reasons are clear. It wrestles with questions of hard moral choice in a world where value systems clash so dramatically as to border on mutual incomprehension, frequently threatening to break into violence; and it deals with those questions through an approach that beat in fundamental synch with Booth's heart, pluralism. But it is very hard to reconcile any substantive meaning of the phrase with Booth's rhetorical enterprise.

Long before he found a word for it, Booth was writing about coduction. In *Modern Dogma*, for instance, telling us how commitments and entrenchments can lead us astray, he says

When we look at either the fanatics or the hyperrationalists who seem to us most threatening in what they do to their fellow men, we find as many signs of bad thinking and corrupted emotion in one group as the other. Fanatics are always 'reasonable' in the sense of seeing rational connections between their abstract principles and their conclusions; their irrationality often consists in choosing the wrong principles validated by an inadequately considered group of 'significant' others. They have lost their 'common sense'—they do not test their commitments by seeking a genuinely common ground shared with [their] relevant fellow creatures. (1974a, 100-101)

The dangerous error of fanatics lies in following a private, or a narrowly social, stream of reasoning. Testing commitments and seeking genuine common ground—exactly what the fanatics fail to do—are crucial elements of coduction. Since we do in fact find examples of fanatics whose values do not appear to overlap with ours, and examples of our own recalcitrant adherence to values when we fall into clashes, we have ultimately to confess that something which smells very much like incommensurability of values holds in seemingly intractable, potentially fatal disputes. And *incommensurability of values*, used as a slogan to engender

respect for the values of others, as an insistence that value conflicts do not mean one disputant is monotonically right, the other monotonically wrong, as a reminder that moral solutions are not always easily achieved by way of exceptionless rules or on a moral abacus, as a label for the serious examination of one's own beliefs, serious charity in the analysis of others, it is perhaps useful. But as a statement of facts—that there is, in principle, no resolution, no conceivable resolution, to such conflicts—it is highly pernicious. And what Booth forces us to recognize here, as he proposes his coductive remedy, is that when we turn away, or reach for cudgels and guns, we have no right to blame the *values*. The fault is ours.

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