

Justice Holmes speaks of men's possibly coming to believe "even more than they believe the very foundations of their own conduct." But what is to be understood by "the very foundations of [one's] own conduct"?

I answer: the very foundations of one's own conduct are one's self-understanding, or understanding of existence, together with the beliefs, practical as well as theoretical, that it necessarily implies.

But then what is to be understood by "the very foundations of one's own conduct" is something like the same thing that is to be understood by the term "religious identity." In both cases, there is an empirical and a more-than-empirical, because existential, aspect of what is referred to. Insofar as the foundations of one's own conduct, or one's religious identity, can be determined to exist, if it does exist, empirically, it can consist only, in addition to "conduct" itself, in one's practical and theoretical beliefs. One's "self-understanding, or understanding of existence," on the other hand, refers to something existential that is not given empirically, as conduct and beliefs are, and can therefore only be inferred, at the risk that the inference is unwarranted.

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