In American society, there is a vast array of belief systems about the mind and the brain. There are those primarily in religion who believe that the mind is something greater than computations done by a biocomputer, which demonstrates an implicit faith that the human mind somehow is connected with a human spirit or soul that transcends the everyday operations of the normal human mind. Such concepts generate a "mind unlimited" belief.

This belief in an unlimited mind available to man goes back into our dim, distant past, long before written history. It is connected with one's religious feelings, with one's religious experience, and with the traditional teachings derived from the formalized religions. Over the millennia, this belief system has become quite powerful and determines the thinking of millions of persons on this planet. It is only recently that a possible alternative to this belief system has arisen, in science and in medicine.

The new belief system arises from studies of medicine, neurology, neurophysiology to a certain extent, but also from the pragmatic way that man and woman treat one another in their everyday relations in the law, in business, and in science. In our everyday pragmatic relationships, we assume that the other person whom we are dealing with is contained within his or her body. We assume that in his or her absence we cannot

1This chapter first appeared as Chapter 7 in Lilly (1977), The Deep Self. It is reprinted here (with revisions) with the permission of the publisher.—Eds.
deal with him or her. When he or she is, say, more than a few hundred feet away, in a sense he or she is missing, absent. When another person is out of reach of our voice in the external world, or out of reach by telephone, somehow or other we have lost contact with him or her. At least we cannot make mutual decisions without his or her presence and his or her agreement in the presence of either the voice or the person.

If there were a secure means of communication without the known physical means of communication, such as voice, vision, vocal feedback, and so forth, we would undoubtedly use these other channels. In the pragmatic everyday world we use that which is available to us. Theoretical possibilities do not enter into our everyday calculations in relationships with others.

Thus, we have arrived implicitly, if not explicitly, at a system of dealing with others in which we depend on the telephone, the telegraph, the letter, the TV image, to link one of us with others. It is only rarely that we have experiences that allow us to say that there are possibilities of communication other than those that currently are represented by the visual image, by the vocal expression, or by the written word.

Thus, in a rather sloppy way, we assume that each person somehow is contained within his or her body, and that to deal with him or her, the body or a known communication means must be available in order to communicate. Out of sight, out of sound, and away from written materials, with no TV set, we are each pragmatically alone. Thus, from the empirical-experience point of view, the person is relegated at least to the body that apparently houses him or her.

Certain empirical observations made over the millennia have convinced certain persons who have studied the subject that the person is not only confined to a body, but is confined to the brain within that body. In the experience of a sufficiently powerful blow to the head, one can see the person disappear, as it were. The body goes into a coma, one can no longer speak with the person within that body–brain, the usual means of communication are cut off abruptly and completely. That particular person is assumed to be unconscious; that is, incapable of communication with those that surround him or her. Such a person for a time remains uncommunicative and then somehow seems to return to conscious use of the body, and communication is resumed.

In medicine, for many years it has been assumed, on the basis of such observations, that the person somehow is a function of intact cerebral cortical activity within the central nervous system. The person is limited to a functioning intact brain, undamaged, not under anesthesia, in a so-called normal state for that particular brain. Such observations have led to the contained-mind hypothesis, or, if you wish, belief system.

This belief system dominates our law; for example, in habeas corpus