Given the present world situation, the ideas presented in Chapter 7 appear inevitable to many people who devote time and thought to the task of ‘learning to think differently’. It should be equally obvious, however, that, of themselves, individually, these ideas lack the power to transform. And so they are being repeated, with variations, over and over again in seemingly endless discussion. We are unable to move forward; we are bogged down. To change the metaphor, we are still essentially imprisoned in the worldview of contemporary global culture. Our cell door is not actually locked, but we are paralysed and cannot open it and walk out despite knowing that freedom is necessary and possible.

Power is not inherent in ideas themselves. But they can acquire power when they are seen as parts of a comprehensive, logically consistent and coherent system – a worldview. They acquire power when they are seen as necessary to the system; that is, when they give meaning to the other ideas of the system (as well as derive meaning from them) and ensure the logical integrity of the system as a whole.

So far we have no system, but only a collection of ideas. Our task is now to build an adequate system. The method of doing this will be to start by answering the most important of the perennial questions, what is real? Having answered that, the other two will be taken up. The logical consistency of the three answers will have to be ensured. The system of answers will incorporate the three concepts described in Chapter 7, modifying or reformulating them as may be necessary to ensure conformity with the overall logic of the system.
What is real?

To answer this question, it is necessary to set forth some criteria of judgement. The criteria that will be adopted here are that only that is real which exists always, which does not come and go, which never changes and which requires nothing else in order to exist.

In constructing a system of answers to the perennial questions, a beginning will be made by assuming the concept of the world as a process, as it was described in Chapter 7. This process can be reduced to a duality of subject and object, to bare notions of subjectivity and objectivity. Each presupposes the other; neither can exist apart from the other. They are thus not ultimate, real entities. Rather, they are but polar aspects of a single entity – experiencing. Or, they are a logical necessity to describe the primary entity – an episode of experiencing. This way of thinking avoids introducing duality, which should ensure logical consistency to our scheme of ideas.

This line of argument can be carried still further to suggest that the unity of subject and object in an episode of experiencing is only an instance of an ultimate unity, and indeed is that unity itself. In support of this suggestion, it may be noted that every episode of experiencing has a beginning and an end. Things that are not permanent, but which come and go, necessarily presuppose a something in the background, which is permanent. This ‘something’ is the enduring, ever-present, unchanging context of all experiencing. It will be termed the One or the Infinite. It is indescribable because it is ‘prior to’ thought. This is the bedrock concept upon which the foundations of the system proposed here will be constructed.

In Chapter 7, it was argued that the ‘I’, the root of our sense of being an individual, is logically the same as the ultimate, universal Being who is yet no Being, no thing. Thus, by a different route, logic leads us to an ultimate unknowable, a something that is nothing – and everything.

Apart from this logical necessity for the concept of the One or Infinite, our direct experience lends support to this notion of ‘something in the background’. When we question ourselves what it is that we know without any possibility of doubt, the only answer we can give is: I exist. As argued in Chapter 7, it is impossible to doubt one’s own existence; in order to doubt, one must exist. This ‘I’ is ever present; in every thought, feeling and act it is ‘I’ who thinks, feels and acts. It is present even in deep sleep; though there is no awareness of the ‘I’ in deep sleep, there is no doubt, when we wake up, that ‘I’ continued during sleep. And in any case, there is no means of proving that the ‘I’ did not exist in deep sleep.