Introduction
Oh, why is not man immortal? . . . Why these brain centers and their convolutions, why vision, speech, feeling, genius, if all this is destined to go into the ground, ultimately to grow cold together with the earth's crust, and then for millions of years to whirl with it around the sun without aim or reason? Surely it is not necessary, merely for the sake of this cooling and whirling, to draw man, with his superior, almost godlike intelligence, out of oblivion and then, as if in jest, to turn him into clay.

—Anton Chekhov

*Ward Six*

Thus our personality shoots, grows and ripens without ceasing. Each of its moments is something new added to what was before. We may go further: it is not only something new, but something unforeseeable.

—Henri Bergson

*Creative Evolution*
There would seem to be rhythms of emphasis in the history of Western thought that manifest pendulumlike swings. These can be broad and cultural or narrow and technical. Usually they are both. Among the most persistent swings is the rationalistic-romantic, which takes many forms. One of the earliest was the Hellenic-Hellenistic; even earlier was the mythological-rational. The primacy of the mythological or religious should be noted; then, with the Greek creation of philosophy, there begins a dialectic that is never pure and never identical in its repeated manifestations but continues to the present. From the first moment that an alternate mode to the mythological account of the world emerges, the dialectic begins. The mythological is never completely eradicated even from Greek philosophy at its apex, but there is surely a shift in dominance. If it can be said that even Plato and Aristotle retain certain mythological dimensions, they are surely diminished from those found in the pre-Socratics. In broad cultural terms, it would seem that Nietzsche is right—something is killed, never to return in precisely the same form, by "Socratic rationalism." However fulfilling and satisfying the exercise of "reason" may have been for an elite group of philosopher/scientists, it failed to satisfy the generality of human beings. The emergence and persistence of the Orphic and Eleusinian mystery religions alongside and concurrent with Greek philosophy is an early indication that some aspect of human experience, some need, is not met by "reason." Whether or not the Hellenistic period was a "failure of nerve," it represents a period of varied and competing claims for human allegiance, only one of which is the "rational." Nevertheless, the rational henceforth will be at least one of the claims and will fulfill at least one human need. Once this mode of consciousness has emerged, there is no possibility of ever again completely suppressing it. It may and indeed will be transformed and modified, but it remains one of the continuing characteristics of the human situation. More, it has shown itself, particularly in the West, to be one of the two
serious claims—the esthetic being the other—able to serve as alternatives to religion.

The emergence of Christianity out of the Hellenistic context moves the dialectic to a new stage. Very early the tension and outright conflict between reason and faith appears. This faith/reason dialectic has continued down to the present. Within the culture at large, we have two simple and clear positions: faith alone is sufficient; reason alone is sufficient. For most of Western history, however, the dominant views have made attempts to account for both. The Tertullian antirationalistic position expressed what has been a continuing claim, but the view of Clement of Alexandria that faith and reason are both good and necessary has been the one that has held most Christians as well as most Jewish and Islamic thinkers. Of course, the abstract assertion that faith and reason cannot be in real conflict is one thing. Concrete demonstration that existential and intellectual conflicts are only apparent is quite another matter. I would suggest that no formal expression of the relation between faith and reason can ever be permanent or definitive. At best these expressions can serve as guidelines, as regulative ideals. Only in the individual person can the two be lived with a degree of relative harmony and reconciliation; and even there the tendency has been for juxtaposition rather than existential synthesis or fruitful dialectic.

During the Middle Ages and while the Church was the dominant formative factor, culturally and individually, the disputes concerning the proper relation between faith and reason were for the most part confined to university circles. All this began to change with the rise of the scientific revolution. Whatever the merits of the technical questions that emerged concerning claims for the new science, this revolution was to have an effect far beyond the intellectual milieu from which it originated. Ironically, the anti-Galileo ecclesiastics saw or sensed this more perceptively than many defenders of science, including Galileo himself. What was coming to an end was a world, a world in which theistic faith (if not myth) was the central and controlling factor not only in matters explicitly religious but in all aspects of human life—political, economic, familial, and artistic. While during the Middle Ages philosophy/science had to show that it could be reconciled with religion, from the eighteenth century on it was increasingly the other way around: religion had to show that it could be reconciled with science or reason. In place of an earlier view that faith alone was sufficient, the Enlightenment brought forth a counterclaim that reason alone was sufficient. Just as earlier fideists had viewed reason as a threat to the integrity of faith, so the new rationalists viewed religious faith as a threat to the integrity of reason.

The success of the new science and the new claims for reason can hardly be exaggerated; there is no aspect of Western culture—and soon one will be able to say of the world—that has remained untouched, for better or worse or both, by science and its consequences, proximate and remote. Again,
however, as in the Greek period, religion did not fold its tent and silently slip away. The responses among those who still affirmed religion, as in the earlier period, were varied and diverse, ranging from complete rejection of scientific or rational claims, insofar as they touched upon any fundamental religious or moral values, to a complete rationalization of religion as the highest flowering of reason. Between these extremes were numerous efforts to modify the claims of both science and religion in such a way as to show that both were justifiable.

The present situation presents a bewildering array of positions reflecting most of the previous responses plus a number peculiar to the age. The comparison of this age to the Hellenistic is well taken: it is a period characterized by supreme and near miraculous achievements in science and technology combined with a profound sense of alienation, frustration, and despair (perhaps unexceeded in human history), giving rise to a variety of cults, religious and other, all promising personal salvation. It has been pointed out by a number of thinkers that as our knowledge of the cosmos has increased, our knowledge of ourselves has not. Earlier in the century, Max Scheler noted that for the first time in history, man had become profoundly problematical to himself. Paradoxically, knowledge or knowledge claims pertaining to the human have become so massive and conflicting as to undermine almost completely our earlier confidence in the human species as well as in individuals.

To the earlier question “What am I?” and the somewhat more recent “Who am I?” has been added, whether from Eastern sources or Western deconstructionist sources, the question “Am I?” There is perhaps no more astounding shift in such a short period than the twentieth-century shift of the radicalizing segment of the Western intellectual community from humanistic existentialism to an antihumanistic structuralism or poststructuralism. In the first half of the twentieth century, some of our most creative thinkers were insisting on the reality of the human subject and defending it against various modes of objectification, whether from science, mass culture, technology, or intellectualism. For about the last twenty-five years, however, some of the most brilliant and creative thinkers have heralded the disappearance of the subject, the self, the ego, the individual, and the like. The human sciences, it is claimed, must surrender the human “subject” if the human is to be an “object” of science. Thus we are confronted with a situation in which “no-self” doctrines are advanced by subtle and sophisticated thinkers. A feature of some Eastern religions that is said to show their superiority to Western religions is that they are not egocentric, that they recognize the illusory character of the individual self.

To suggest, at this time, not only that the individual self is real but that it may possess a reality such that its existence will not be restricted to its present spatio-temporal conditions, is probably more foolish than daring. And yet, and yet . . . it must be done if for no other reason than the fact that the
question of my person seems to me unavoidable. If, of course, this is an isolated and idiosyncratic feeling, then my efforts will have only a personal therapeutic effect at most. But I do not believe that it is only my question, and the only way to find out is to ask, however haltingly and inadequately, and listen for a response. Of course, if the only task were to ask a pollster-like question about the afterlife, it would be quite simple and, for some, reassuring: it would seem that a surprisingly high number of human beings still say they believe in an afterlife. But while such data are not completely irrelevant, they do not take us far in relation to the crucial question: namely, can we who have been touched by the intellectual and experiential revolutions of the contemporary world still believe with any degree of coherence and consistency that we as individual persons are immortal? To respond to this question—it is not a question that has an "answer"—is to participate, in however modest a way, in that long and continuing effort to show that one's faith is not only not in essential conflict with the best insights and achievements of contemporary thought and experience but that indeed this faith is deepened and enriched by such insights. It is not false modesty to say that the most I can hope to do is to hint at, or point to, or suggest how such a harmonization might be realized. Whatever the merit of any particular effort to realize consistency between "faith" and "reason," I share with John Herman Randall, Jr., the view that it is an eminently worthwhile effort. This attempt to bring "religious beliefs into accord with philosophic truth" is designated by Randall "rational" or "philosophical theology." As he states: "Its worth lies not in the formulations of the moment—they will soon give way to others. It lies rather in the conviction that it is supremely important to make the never ending effort to understand."\(^1\)

No response to the question, "Is the individual person immortal?" is possible without a prior response to the question, "What is the nature of the individual person?" Or, in keeping with the kind of objections already referred to, "Are there such realities as individual persons?" In raising this question, one opens a Pandora's box, for there emerges a bewildering variety of allied questions—some with long histories, and others that involve very technical matters. Among these questions are the following: Are human beings completely accounted for in terms of matter (bracketing the question as to what matter is)? Are human beings composed of both matter and spirit, body and soul? If so, what is the role and relation of each? Are these really distinct principles or only distinct functions? What is the nature of consciousness? Is it substantive or only epiphenomenal? Are mind and brain identical? If not, how can they be differentiated? What is the nature of the human body? Is there personal identity? If so, how can it be accounted for? Is there a distinction between the individual and the person? If so, what is it? Is the human being identical with and reducible to her or his behavior? Is the human being reducible to the various social structures that constitute it?
The literature on these questions is vast, varied, and in many instances highly technical, both philosophically and scientifically. Yet one can say with reasonable assurance that there is no one position concerning the nature of the human person, philosophical or scientific, that has anything approaching a definitive consensus. Perhaps there will someday emerge an understanding of the human so overwhelmingly persuasive that only cranks will dissent. For the foreseeable future, however, anyone reflecting on this question will have to make some crucial choices, assumptions, or acts of faith. At what might be called the relatively unreflective level, “you picks your horse and bets your money” and let it go at that. Some will accept without question that we are merely what can be seen and touched, weighed and measured; others who insist that we are more than our bodies will simply assert that this “more” is spirit or soul. The first group does not even consider immortality. Its view is expressed succinctly in such time-honored phrases as “seize the day,” or “you only live once,” or “eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die,” or “when you’re dead you’re dead.” The second group has its own time-honored phrases: “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”; “this life is but a preparation for the next”; “the visible world is temporal while the invisible world is eternal”; “I’m but a stranger here—heaven is my home.”

Both views have a variety of more or less reflective and sophisticated expressions, but they can be broadly reduced to two classical modes: namely, materialism and dualism. Materialism has no difficulty with the question of immortality, since it is ruled out from the start. Whatever versions of materialism are advanced, they all share the view that the individual human self has no reality apart from or beyond the particular material complex called the “body.” The situation with dualism is a bit more complex, because while all materialisms exclude immortality, not all dualisms affirm immortality. Aristotelian dualism, for example, apparently does not, or at least does not clearly, allow for immortality. Thomistic or Cartesian dualism, on the other hand, affirms at least the ontological possibility if not the necessity of personal immortality.

Perhaps any affirmation of immortality must involve some mode of dualism. If so, the defender of immortality must face the formidable antidualistic views that have proliferated in the twentieth century. The various critiques of any form of Cartesian “ghost in the machine” have come close to an antidualistic consensus. Such issues, however, are not settled by a head count, even if those heads are impressive philosophical or scientific ones; hence, it would be simply incorrect to say that dualism has been philosophically or scientifically refuted. Arthur Lovejoy’s The Refutation of Dualism, written over fifty years ago, in which the claims of a variety of impressive philosophers to have overcome dualism are seriously and subtly challenged, still stands as a caution against those who would lightly dismiss dualism. In addition, the work of such respectable contemporary dualists as H. D.
Lewis, Peter Geach, and Roderick Chisholm serves as evidence that dualism remains a respectable philosophical option. 

Even though dualism does not necessarily entail personal immortality, there can be no question that it is eminently congenial to it, and that any doctrine of immortality may be at least implicitly dualistic. This would be so if dualism were defined so broadly as to include any view claiming that the reality of the individual self is not confined to its visible spatio-temporal coordinates. Such a definition of dualism, however, seems unwarrantedly broad since many philosophies that claim to be antidualistic—such as various forms of phenomenology—deny along with Martin Heidegger that the self is enclosed within the envelope of the skin. As I see it, there are numerous and often conflicting efforts to devise a doctrine of the self that escapes both classical materialism and classical dualism. These efforts, in my opinion, offer the richest possibilities for an adequate doctrine of the self. My particular concern is whether they inevitably exclude the possibility of personal immortality. That most of them claim to do so is unquestionable; whether a non-dualistic doctrine that does not exclude immortality is plausible is the question with which I am concerned.

What I would like to suggest and broadly sketch is a doctrine of the self that is reasonably consistent with at least one mode of contemporary antidualism—namely, pragmatism (principally as expressed in the work of William James and to a lesser extent in John Dewey)—and yet is open to the possibility of belief in personal immortality. If such belief can be reasonably justified, therefore, it would not find itself in conflict with or merely juxtaposed to a doctrine of the self essentially uncongenial to such belief. I think doctrines of the self and immortality are needed that mutually reinforce one another. Hence, while I do not believe it possible to construct a view of the self that logically entails immortality, I do not think it enough to have a self that merely does not positively and absolutely exclude immortality. What is needed is a self that would be essentially enhanced by its extension to life beyond the visible present. By the same token, an immortality belief merely juxtaposed or tacked on to the existential self will not do. Such belief must be shown to be here and now significant and effective; it must not merely refer to some future realization—though it will involve the future—but be a contributing factor to the ongoing existential constituting of the self.

My essay, therefore, has two broad divisions, distinct but not separate: the possibility of immortality, and the desirability of immortality. The first will focus on the nature of the self and endeavor to construct a doctrine or model that is internally coherent, reasonably consistent, and also congenial to immortality. A crucial corollary of this doctrine of the self is an organically related doctrine of God, since it will be argued that only a self that has as one of its constituent relations the relation to God has the possibility for immortality. The second part of the essay will attempt to show that immor-
Introduction

tality is desirable, both in pointing toward an attractive mode of life and in energizing human beings here and now.

PRAGMATISM’S METAPHYSICAL ASSUMPTIONS
Before presenting doctrines of the self and God, it will be necessary to indicate something of how I view the character of the “world” or “reality.” Why, it may be asked, if one is concerned with the question of immortality, is it necessary to take on such all-encompassing and overwhelming questions as “What is the world?” or “What is reality?” To do so is to leap into that intellectual thicket in which many formidable thinkers have become hopelessly lost or to step into an intellectual quicksand that has relentlessly consumed precious human energies. To put it crudely, why open up the metaphysical “can of worms”? The simplest response is to note that a world from which personal immortality is excluded and a world in which it is possible are radically different—and that difference gives rise to experiential consequences of great significance.

Does this mean that unless we can present a fully developed and systematic metaphysics, we are prohibited from reflecting on the question of immortality? I sincerely hope not, for such an accomplishment is much beyond the intellectual capability not only of most reflective humans but of most professional philosophers. There is, however, a less formal sense of metaphysics that touches, in various degrees, practically all of us. I refer to metaphysics as an “angle of vision” or perspective from which we view the world and by means of which we interact with and perhaps constitute the world. This perspective involves a number of fundamental assumptions which, though for the most part unquestioned, influence our lives in their various spheres and activities—assumptions, for example, that there is a world; that this world is independent of us; that we can know this world; that there is truth and error, right and wrong; that we as individuals exist. I use the term “assumptions” deliberately because most people simply take for granted, without question, the principles or values by which they live.

Of course, that human activity which has been designated “philosophy” has always had as part of its task the questioning of those assumptions, and the various positions taken in regard to them have given rise to a rich variety of philosophies. While in one sense this is quite obvious, in another sense it is less so. Nietzsche perhaps overstated the case, but not by much, when he accused philosophers of failing to question their assumptions. Philosophers have never been hesitant to question other philosophers’ assumptions, but they have often claimed that their own were “given” or “self-evident” or “proved” (by them). Most philosophers today are more modest than that about their philosophical claims, but while few would maintain that absolute certitude is realizable, most reject skepticism, radical subjectivism, and destructive relativism.

We might designate two broad tasks as involved in any philosophical en-
Introduction

deavor. The first is to clarify, articulate, and describe the metaphysical assumptions that govern one's inquiry. While these principles are not, strictly speaking, provable and are in a sense acts of faith, they must nevertheless be reasonably coherent and consistent with data from all kinds of experience—ordinary, scientific, esthetic, religious, and moral. The second task, therefore, is to present evidence and/or arguments in support of these assumptions or principles and to draw out their implications—theoretical and practical. The diverse ways in which these tasks are executed result in the variety and diversity of philosophies manifest in every age but particularly in the twentieth century.

One twentieth-century way has been designated "pragmatism"—which does not tell us very much, since there are probably as many distinct, though not totally different, pragmatisms as there are pragmatists. But since I claim that my approach to the question of personal immortality is "pragmatic," I must indicate what I am presupposing when I use the term. The mode of pragmatism—though it is but one version—to which I incline and which I am presupposing for the purposes of this essay can be described as processive, relational, personalistic, and pluralistic.

Additionally, I will understand pragmatism as both a metaphysics and a method of evaluation. I use the phrase "method of evaluation" rather than "theory of truth" in order to bypass the long, tortuous, and often contentious criticism of pragmatism as a theory of truth. I would, however, insist on one point: regardless of whether one speaks of "pragmatic truth" or "pragmatic evaluation," neither can be dealt with adequately without acknowledging the distinctive metaphysics that accompanies and is inseparable from them.

Now to speak of "pragmatic metaphysics" may seem oxymoronic, since it is well known that pragmatism is antimetaphysical if metaphysics is understood in its classical sense as knowledge of the ultimate and unchanging character of being—or reality-in-itself. In this sense of the term, pragmatism at most can be described as a mode of metaphysical agnosticism, since it denies that we can know what is, or whether there is, "ultimate reality"—that is, reality constituted in itself unrelated to human experience; further, though pragmatism describes reality in terms of processes, it remains agnostic concerning any ultimate origin or end of the world process or processes. Nevertheless, pragmatism does not hesitate to venture some metaphysical guesses or construct some metaphysical myths by way of extrapolation from concrete experience as to what characterizes reality or the world. While, on the basis of what is available to human experience, there can be no absolute origin or absolute end, still we can discern and/or speculate about possible directions and opt to work for some directions and against others. Such efforts, of course, must be energized by beliefs and hopes which, though not "provable," are nevertheless "reasonable."

This last point brings us back to "pragmatic evaluation," which I will
consider a bit later. First, let me return to the four features of pragmatism as I define it. Instead of viewing them as features of pragmatism, however, I will treat them as characteristics of reality or the world; thus, the world presupposed throughout this essay is processive, relational, personalistic, and pluralistic. The first two characteristics are developed throughout the body of the text; in summary, a world of processes and relations contrasts sharply and importantly with a world of permanent or unchanging substances, laws, essences, and values. Pragmatism's world excludes both metaphysical dualism wherein reality is divided into changing and unchanging or temporal and eternal realities, and any atomistic individualism wherein beings (atoms or gods) exist as essentially unrelational, isolated, self-enclosed, or self-sufficient. In the language of James, this is an "unfinished universe" or a "world in the making" and is thereby open to radical novelty. All modes of human activity take on a potentially creative role in such a world. What the world will be depends, at least in part, on our thoughts, beliefs, loves, hopes, hates, and actions. The nature and role of immortality belief within such a world is, of course, a central concern of this essay.

WORLD OR REALITY AS "PERSONALISTIC"

There is a stronger and a weaker sense in which the world or reality can be designated "personalistic." In the weaker sense we would have a world that includes or gives rise to some beings categorized as "persons." A personalistic world in the stronger sense would be one in which all real beings are characterized by "personhood." For most people, the first claim is obviously true and the second obviously false. Which of these senses would express pragmatism's meaning of "personalistic world"? As stated, neither; properly modified, however, pragmatism's meaning would be closer to the strong sense. Pragmatism's version of such a world claims to find in personal experience traits common to all realities. There are hints, though no developed presentation, of such a view in James, Dewey, and Alfred North Whitehead, who—on this point at least—can be brought under the umbrella of pragmatism. Before reviewing texts in which these three thinkers maintain that any metaphysical generalizations must be grounded in immediate experience, it is important to understand what is meant by "experience" throughout this essay, particularly because much of what will be said about self, God, and immortality will be extrapolated from personal experience.

The nature and role of "experience" within pragmatism is a story in itself, a long and not always clear one. For present purposes, a few key points will suffice. "Experience," for the pragmatists, is not identical with the "experience" of classical empiricism stemming from David Hume and John Stuart Mill. The differences are described clearly and sharply by Dewey in a 1917 essay entitled, "The Need for a Recovery in Philosophy." He contrasts what I shall call the traditional and the pragmatic views on five points. First,
whereas experience in the traditional view is primarily a "knowledge-affair," for the pragmatist it is "an affair of the intercourse of a living being with its physical and social environment." Second, experience from the traditional perspective is primarily psychical and permeated by "subjectivity"; to the pragmatist, experience suggests an objective world modifying and modified by human actions and sufferings. Third, experience is traditionally seen as tied to the past or as "given"; in its pragmatic mode it is experimental, oriented to changing the given and thereby having connection with a future as its salient trait. The fourth point of contrast is between an "empirical tradition committed to particularism" and one for which experience is "pregnant with connections." Finally, experience and thought are antithetical terms from the traditional perspective, whereas pragmatism’s experience is "full of inference" and thereby renders reflection "native and constant."

Stated most succinctly and in Deweyan language, experience for the pragmatist is an organism-environment transaction. Since there are a variety and diversity of such transactions, there is a variety of experiences differing in scope and quality, such as cognitive experience, esthetic experience, affective experience, and religious experience. While we can distinguish these various experiences, they never operate in complete isolation, nor do they relate to separate modes of reality. How these different modes of experience relate, overlap, and interpenetrate is a most complex question and can never be described with definitive clarity. Any distinctions between them are never made "for their own sake" or in an attempt to mirror the way these experiences allegedly are "in themselves." Rather, the distinctions can only be justified pragmatically insofar as they deepen, enrich, and illuminate the quality of human life.

Bearing in mind this view of experience as transactional, let us look at a few texts that point toward pragmatism as a "metaphysics of experience." In his essay "The Philosophy of Whitehead," Dewey notes that whatever their other philosophical differences, "the background and point of departure seems to be the same for both of us." The crucial point held in common is that "the traits of experience provide clews for forming 'generalized descriptions' of nature." Dewey goes on to emphasize the importance of this shared claim:

The idea that the immediate traits of distinctively human experience are highly specialized cases of what actually goes on in every actualized event of nature does infinitely more than merely deny the existence of an impassable gulf between physical and psychological subject matter. It authorizes us, as philosophers engaged in forming highly generalized descriptions of nature, to use the traits of immediate experience as clews for interpreting our observations of non-human and non-animate nature.

There is little doubt that Dewey has correctly represented Whitehead’s perspective, for early in Process and Reality we are told that "the elucidation of
Immediate experience is the sole justification for any thought; and the starting point for thought is the analytic observation of components of this experience." Elsewhere, Whitehead states: "The world within experience is identical with the world beyond experience."

Earlier than either Dewey or Whitehead, James insisted that personal experience is the crucial pathway to whatever reality is available to us. In his last work, unpublished at the time of his death, James asks "whether we are not here witnessing in our own personal experience what is really the essential process of creation" (SPP, 108). And in the last work he published, he maintained that "the only material we have at our disposal for making a picture of the whole world is supplied by the various portions of that world of which we have already had experience" (PU, 9). A similar point had been expressed elsewhere: "No philosophy can ever do more than interpret the whole, which is unknown, after the analogy of some particular part which we know" (CER, 469).

I will later discuss the well-known—some might say notorious—Jamesian notion that life or experience "exceeds our logic" and its corollary that experience or feeling brings us to a deeper and richer reality, to "more" reality, than we are ever able to verbalize or conceptualize. Here I would like merely to touch upon this theme insofar as it indicates a dimension of what is implied in the claim that we live in a personalistic universe.

Ralph Barton Perry does not hesitate to say that the priority of original experience over representations or descriptions is "the most general principle in James's philosophy." James himself emphasized "the gaping contrast between the richness of life and the poverty of all possible formulas" (TC, II:127), and maintained that "something forever exceeds, escapes from statement, withdraws from definition, must be glimpsed and felt, not told" (TC, II:329). It is in religion that the personal and feeling characteristics are most in evidence, for "the religious individual tells you that the divine meets him on the basis of his personal concerns" (VRE, 387). Further, "feeling is the deeper source of religion," and that is why James calls theological formulas secondary. He doubts that any philosophic theology would ever even have been framed "in a world in which no religious feeling had ever existed" (VRE, 341).

The point I particularly wish to stress here is that while the personal and experiential are preeminently found in religion, they are not exclusively found there. James maintains that scientific and religious truths are consistent and homogeneous because, insofar as their final appeal is to experience, they are both "truths of experience" (TC, I:451). A more important, and surely more controversial claim is that our deepest and fullest grasp of reality is by means of the personal rather than the impersonal: "So long as we deal with the cosmic and the general, we deal only with the symbols of reality, but as soon as we deal with the private and personal phenomena as such, we deal with realities in the completest sense of the term" (VRE, 393). Thus, from James's perspective, the "impersonality of the scientific attitude" is shallow.
But James does not consider the impersonal world described by modern science as the last word, even for science.

The spirit and principles of science are mere affairs of method; there is nothing in them that need hinder science from dealing successfully with a world in which personal forces are the starting-point of new effects. The only form of things that we directly encounter, the only experience that we concretely have, is our own personal life. . . . And this systematic denial on science's part of personality as a condition of events, this rigorous belief that in its own essential and innermost nature our world is a strictly impersonal world, may, conceivably, as the whirligig of time goes round, prove to be the very defect that our descendants will be most surprised at in our own boasted science, the omission that to their eyes will most tend to make it look perspectiveless and short. (WB, 241)

In sum, then, pragmatism's universe can be said to be "personalistic" or "experiential" because transactional activity, which is most immediately and richly evidenced in personal experience, is generalized or posited as "metaphysical": that is, as constitutive of all realities. "Human" experience, therefore, is not in some magical fashion superadded to nature; rather it is but one of a multiplicity of modes of transactional activity. Hence, James insists that the "word 'activity' has no imaginable content whatever save these experiences of process, obstruction, striving, strain, or release, ultimate qualia as they are of the life given us to be known." We cannot, therefore, suppose activities to go on outside our experience unless we suppose them in forms like these (ERE, 84). The metaphysics presupposed by pragmatism, then, might properly be designated "transactional realism."

PLURALISTIC UNIVERSE

The processive-pluralistic character of reality will be in evidence throughout the body of the text. We shall come to see in more detail that in the world presupposed by pragmatism there is a multiplicity of centers of activity, no one of which is completely isolated or unrelated and no one of which includes all the others. If we designate this "ontological pluralism," then we can call its correlative pluralism "epistemological." Inasmuch as this is a "pluralistic, restless universe," the entire universe cannot be encompassed within any single point of view (WB, 136). According to James, "We have so many different businesses with nature that no one of them yields us an all-embracing clasp" (PU, 19). Experience shows us that the universe is "a more many-sided affair than any sect, even the scientific sect, allows for" (VRE, 104). Since "to no one type of mind is it given to discern the totality of truth" (WB, 224), James is led to suggest that "common sense is better for one sphere of life, science for another, philosophic criticism for a third" (P, 93). Such epistemological pluralism is, of course, a mode of perspectivism, but it is not—or at least not obviously—a mode of destructive relativism and superficial subjectivism. Pragmatism acknowledges that every thought
claim is perspectival and partial, but it does not thereby concede that we are prohibited from making reasonable choices among such claims or perspectives. Which brings us to the nature and role of "pragmatic evaluation."

PRAGMATIC INQUIRY AND EVALUATION
Any pragmatic inquiry is indefinitely open-ended, particularly when dealing with such issues as self, God, and immortality. The initial stage might be designated "probative" or "exploratory." In this stage, a hypothesis must be constructed that is not glaringly contradictory or inconsistent. The evidence in favor of the hypothesis must be broadly described and its possible fruits indicated. This stage will, for the most part, bracket or move gingerly over many technical details and difficulties to which the hypothesis gives rise. (It is within this stage that, for the most part, the present essay will be located.) Subsequent stages of a pragmatic inquiry will have to deal with these difficulties and either overcome them or modify the hypothesis accordingly. Concurrently, the projected "fruits" will have to be evaluated. This meeting of difficulties and evaluation of fruits will be continuous and ongoing, and the hypothesis will remain viable only as long as, "on the whole," the difficulties are not insuperable and the fruits are sufficiently abundant.

In regard to the investigation and evaluation of personal immortality, the pragmatist insists upon two things. First, it cannot be either proved or disproved. Second, and more important, believers have the obligation to evaluate their belief and to search out its "justifying reasons." Such evaluation must eventually relate to concrete experience. More specifically, it must respond to the extent possible to the overwhelming mass of cumulative experience, whether quotidian, historical, artistic, scientific, moral, or religious. Any conclusions reached in this evaluative process will always be tentative and subject to modification under the press of future experience, but we are not thereby excused from making the most "reasonable" case possible at any moment.

Without pretending to present a fully developed description of pragmatic inquiry and evaluation, I would like to call attention to a few crucial points both for the purpose of clarification and to avoid a gross misunderstanding of the claims of pragmatism. To begin with, whatever the difficulties associated with pragmatism's "method"—and they are numerous and well documented—there is no possibility of understanding it unless one remains aware of its metaphysical assumptions, already alluded to. Pragmatism posits a processive-relational world, an "unfinished universe," a "world in the making." Within such a world, pragmatism opposes—in the language of Dewey—any "partitioning of territories" whereby "facts" are assigned to science and "values" to philosophy and religion. It denies that science is grounded on reason while morality and religion are grounded on faith. Pragmatism very early surrendered the great Western dream, brought to a crescendo by René Descartes and reprised by Edmund Husserl, of ground-
ing philosophy/science on an absolutely certain foundation. This rejection does not lead the pragmatist to embrace either irrationalism or subjectivistic relativism. Reason has a crucial and indispensable role to play in human life; it is, however, but one mode of experience, one mode of transaction between poles of reality, and it neither exists nor operates in isolation from other modes.

For pragmatism, the world is neither simply “rational” nor “irrational,” though it involves dimensions of both. There is evidence for believing that the world is becoming more rational and that humans have a crucial role to play in that rationalizing process. “The world,” James tells us, “has shown itself, to a great extent, plastic to this demand of ours for rationality.” He goes on to say that the only means of finding out how much more it can become rational is to try out our conceptions of moral as well as mechanical or logical necessity (WB, 115). In surrendering the quest for absolutes—whether foundations, truths, values, or ends—pragmatism is not surrendering its quest for “reasonableness.” Further, the denial of final closure on any question does not exclude the possibility of—indeed, the necessity for—intellectual and existential judgments and decisions. All nontrivial judgments and decisions will have the characteristics of incompleteness and tentativeness and will lack the feature of absolute certitude. Of course, if probability and provisionality were merely characteristics of pragmatic inquiry and evaluation, it would hardly be of moment. Pragmatism insists, however, that the limitations of inquiry are due not to the incompetence of pragmatists but to the nature of the world within which inquiry and evaluation are exercised. James concedes that pragmatism can be legitimately reproached with “vagueness and subjectivity and ‘on-the-whole’-ness,” but he quickly adds that the “entire life of man” is liable to the same reproach. “If we claim only reasonable probability, it will be as much as men who love the truth can ever at any given moment hope to have within their grasp” (VRE, 266, 267).

All pragmatic evaluations, whether of ideas, beliefs, values, or institutions, are always open to modification and correction. As stated by Dewey: “Any one of our beliefs is subject to criticism, revision, and even ultimate elimination through the development of its own implications by intelligently directed action.” If pragmatism’s method can be said to be modeled on that of modern science, it is insofar as it shares with science the feature of self-correction. This is a community process with “later views correcting earlier ones” (PP, I:191), resulting in a continually cumulating experience. This cumulative experience enables us to build on earlier successes, however partial, in an effort to engender new successes, however partial. While “there are no successes to be guaranteed” (VRE, 299) and no certain, uncorrectable conclusions to be reached, we are not thereby “playing into the hands of skepticism.” James insists that it is one thing “to admit one’s liability to correction” and quite another “to embark upon a sea of wanton doubt” (VRE, 267).
Granted that pragmatism excludes any definitive "once and for all" mode of evaluation, how might it be described more positively? Stated simply, much too simply, we can say that within the processive-relational world presupposed by pragmatism, ideas, beliefs, symbols, and institutions—all of which originate in experience—can be judged only on the basis of the experiential consequences or quality of life they bring forth. This is expressed most succinctly in Dewey's pragmatic test for any philosophy: "Does it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful?" The consequentialism that distinguishes pragmatism is by no means crystal clear and consistent, nor does it have an identical meaning in Charles Sanders Peirce, James, and Dewey. Without making any attempt to delineate what the methods of these three pragmatists share and where they diverge, let me simply draw on a few texts of James, since his approach is most congenial to my purposes.

To begin with, there is a well-recognized ambiguity in James's pragmatic method that allows for both a positivistic and a personalistic reading. Thus Elizabeth Flower and Murray G. Murphey note a certain relaxation of the pragmatic criterion whereby it is broadened "from verifying consequences in particular sensible experiences to consequences for the quality of human living." It is the personalistic or humanistic emphasis to which I am attracted and which I consider more faithful to the full range of James's notion of experience. Something of this is expressed by H. S. Thayer: "The particularly extraordinary feature of Pragmatism is its reflection of James's ardent concern to bring philosophic thought into immediate contact with the real perplexities, the uncertainties and resurgent hopes that permeate ordinary human experience" (P, xxxvii). Perry, in noting that for James "the basic dogmas of religion are not wholly without evidence," adds that James compiles this evidence by "appealing to experience in the broad sense, and rejecting that narrower or positivistic version of experience which already presupposes a naturalistic world-order." This broadened meaning of experience is expressed in what was perhaps James's last formulation of the "pragmatic rule": "The pragmatic rule is that the meaning of a concept may always be found, if not in some sensible particular which it directly designates, then in some particular difference in the course of human experience which its being true will make" (SPP, 37).

In stressing the practical consequences, for "anyone," of an idea or a belief, James left himself open to the charge of fostering a narrow and destructive subjectivism. There can be no doubt that his failure to make some crucial distinctions lent some support to this charge, though I am persuaded that the weight and totality of his thought is against it. James surely intended to make satisfaction of the individual a crucial factor in any pragmatic evaluation, but what is not usually adequately stressed is that James rejected the atomistic individualism that is a necessary component of the kind
of subjectivism with which he was often charged. It is the burden of a large segment of this essay to spell out a relational view of the individual self which was, as a minimum, implicit in James's thought. Judging what is "satisfactory" or "satisfying" for such a self is immensely more complex than describing what appears to satisfy some imaginary or psychically isolated ego. In a letter to Perry, written a few years before his death, James expressed his dismay at being misunderstood.

The pragmatism that lives inside of me is so different from that of which I succeed in wakening the idea inside of other people, that theirs makes me feel like cursing God and dying. When I say that, other things being equal, the view of things that seems more satisfactory morally will legitimately be treated by men as truer than the view that seems less so, they quote me as saying that anything morally satisfactory can be treated as true, no matter how unsatisfactory it may be from the point of view of its consistency with what we already know or believe to be true about physical or natural facts. Which is rot!! (TC, II:468)

Because James's relationalism was so often overlooked, his pragmatism is reduced to such crude formulations as "anything is true or good if it makes someone feel good." Inasmuch as emotionally "feeling good" is but one of a number of relevant factors in the situation of any individual, it can never serve as the sole criterion of what is judged "good." James quite explicitly rejected such a view when he said that "what immediately feels most 'good' is not always most 'true,' when measured by the verdict of the rest of experience. . . . If merely 'feeling good' could decide, drunkenness would be the supremely valid human experience" (VRE, 22; italics added). The same failure to acknowledge the relational context that James takes for granted results in reducing pragmatism itself to crude formulas: "whatever works for the individual is good," for example. In support of such an interpretation one might cite James's claim that pragmatism's "only test of truth is what works best in the way of leading us." What would be left out in such an interpretation, however, is the rest of the sentence in which James adds some qualifications: "what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experience's demands, nothing being omitted" (P, 44; italics added). He expresses the same acknowledgment of the complexity of evaluation as follows: "If theological ideas prove to have a value for concrete life, they will be true, for pragmatism, in the sense of being good for so much. For how much more they are true, will depend entirely on their relations to the other truths that also have to be acknowledged" (P, 40-41).

I am not for a moment suggesting that James achieved such complex evaluation of any of our religious or moral beliefs, and I am most certainly not suggesting that I will realize such achievement in what follows. I am suggesting, however, that whatever shortcomings pragmatism may have, it cannot properly be charged with taking the easy road to evaluation. Indeed, it points toward a method that for even partial realization would be immensely demanding and rigorous. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience,*
James designated three tests that are applicable to religious truth: immediate luminousness, philosophical reasonableness, and moral helpfulness (VRE 23). Perry noted that “these are new names for criteria of knowledge which appear repeatedly in James’s philosophy” (TC, II:334). In A Pluralistic Universe, James said that “rationality has at least four dimensions, intellectual, aesthetical, moral and practical.” He added that “to find a world rational to the maximal degree in all these respects simultaneously is no easy matter.” The task would be to get “a conception which will yield the largest balance of rationality rather than one which will yield perfect rationality of every description” (PU, 55). Since I am suggesting that “pragmatic evaluation” claims to be a mode of “rational” evaluation, these last texts serve to reinforce my claim that pragmatism, while affirming personal experience as its ultimate touchstone, involves a diversity of subtle criteria in its effort to reach any concrete evaluation of the lived consequences of an idea, belief, or institution.

It is against such background presuppositions that I will maintain throughout this essay that the worth of any belief in immortality (or its counterbelief) must be evaluated in relation to human experience. Louis Dupré has suggested that “the belief in life after death appears to have grown out of actual experiences more than out of reasoning processes.” Whether or not Dupré is correct concerning the origin of this belief, I would maintain that in the past it has been a significant belief only to the extent that it has borne directly or indirectly upon personal experience. By the same token, it has tended to become insignificant in proportion to its distance from the ongoing lives of human beings. A pragmatic inquiry into the nature and worth of belief in personal immortality must, therefore, bring forth the positive and negative, actual and implicit, consequences of such belief. This kind of approach, it is important to note, is not restricted to description, even assuming that such description could be more nearly complete than it ever is. Pragmatic inquiry also includes a speculative or critical component that suggests possibilities for a future course of action. Put simply, on the basis of the way things are and have been, the pragmatist ventures a guess as to how they might be—“guessing” that takes the mode of extrapolation.

PRAGMATIC EXTRAPOLATION
Any effort to talk about a future mode of the individual self or the cosmic process, or even about this process considered as a totality or as a whole, takes us beyond both direct experience and inferential reasoning, strictly considered. Such a movement might be designated speculation, imagination, or the term employed here, extrapolation. Any pragmatic extrapolation of the future, as I have pointed out elsewhere, must fulfill at least four conditions. First, it must proceed from data given in experience. Second, this projected future must be plausible—that is, it must not be in fundamen-
Introduction

tal conflict with the data from which it is an extrapolation. Third, the future state must be sufficiently different from the present state so that the future is not merely the present indefinitely extended. Fourth and most important, the extrapolation must render our present life—in both its individual and communal aspects—more meaningful, more significant, and more rich. 30

Since the goal of extrapolation in the present endeavor is to produce a model of the self and the cosmic process which is open to immortality, a word should be said about how "model" is to be understood. Ian Barbour has given us an excellent description of the nature and role of models in both science and religion. Although I cannot claim Barbour for the pragmatic tradition—he calls himself a "critical realist"—I will appropriate some of his language concerning models which I find eminently congenial to pragmatism.

Broadly speaking, a model is a symbolic representation of selected aspects of the behavior of a complex system for particular purposes. It is an imaginative tool for ordinary experience, rather than a description of the world. . . . Models are taken seriously but not literally. They are neither literal pictures of reality nor "useful fictions," but partial and provisional ways of imagining what is not observable; they are symbolic representation of aspects of the world which are not directly accessible to us.

Models in religion are also analogical. They are organizing images used to order and interpret patterns of experience in human life. Like scientific models, they are neither literal pictures of reality nor useful fictions. . . . Ultimate models—whether of a personal God or an impersonal cosmic process—direct attention to particular patterns in events and restructure the way one sees the world. (MMP, 6–7)31

The kind of pragmatic model called for would not pretend to give us either a pictorial or a conceptual representation of reality. Its chief function will be to enable us to participate more creatively in and with reality. Such a model must result from an extrapolative process that begins in and relates back to concrete experience.32 Like any pragmatic evaluation, it will be subject to criticism in terms of consistency, coherence, and continuity of experience, but its ultimate worth will be determined by the quality of life that it suggests, encourages, and makes possible.33

PERSONAL IMMORTALITY

One final introductory point: the concern of this essay is personal immortality—by which is meant simply and crudely the survival of the "I" or the "me."34 At least five other modes of immortality have been suggested: absolute spirit immortality (we are immortal insofar as we are absorbed with the Eternal Spirit, or the Everlasting God, or the One); cosmic immortality (we are immortal insofar as we emerge from and return to the cosmos or nature); ideal immortality (we are immortal insofar as we participate in timeless values or eternal ideals); achievement immortality (we are immortal
through our creative acts or deeds); posterity immortality (we are immortal through our children, or the community, or the race).  

Now whatever their differences and however valuable their respective insights, these five modes all have one thing in common—the individual person will cease to be, he or she will be without remainder, at the moment of death. My contention, in contrast though not totally in opposition, is that the loss involved in such modes of personless immortality is directly proportional to the worth of the individual person; further, failing personal immortality, that there are no adequate surrogates which can serve to alleviate the pain of loss. Assuming that human persons are precious realizations of nature or the cosmic process, the failure to maintain these persons in that mode of individuality upon which their preciousness depends may be a harsh truth to be endured but surely not to be celebrated. Finally, while beliefs in immortality through ideals, achievements, nature, humankind, or God have been known to and can continue to inspire and energize a portion of humanity, the exclusion of the individual person from these modes cannot but have a radically diminished pragmatic efficacy for the overwhelming number of human beings.

Further, the contemporary awareness of the probable obliteration, naturally or humanly induced, of the earth and its inhabitants has deprived at least three modes of immortality (cosmic, achievement, posterity) of much of their attraction even for these select groups. From among the numerous expressions of pessimism concerning the earth’s future, it will suffice to cite two, one from a philosopher (Bertrand Russell) and one from a poet (W. B. Yeats).

That all the labor of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man’s achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the débris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand.

The wandering earth herself may be
Only a sudden flaming word,
In clanging space a moment heard,
Troubling the endless reverie.

There is perhaps no more plaintive cry against any kind of immortality that excludes the individual person than the one found in The Brothers Karamazov: “Surely I haven’t suffered, simply that I, my crimes and my sufferings, may manure the soil of the future harmony for somebody else. I want to see with my own eyes the hind lie down with the lion and the victim rise up and embrace his murderer. I want to be there when everyone suddenly understands what it has all been for.”

There is a certain irony here, of course, in that Dostoevsky puts these
words in the mouth of Ivan—the "unbeliever." Whatever Fyodor Dosto­
eevsky's overt belief, or overbelief, in personal immortality, his artistic ex­
pression is more ambiguous and more characteristic of the modern sens­
sibility. "There is only one supreme idea on earth," he tells us in Diary of a
Writer, "the idea of the immortality of the human soul, since all other 'high­
est' ideas man lives by derive from it." Further, "without the belief in the
existence of the soul and its immortality human existence is 'unnatural' and
unbearable." Unequivocal as this statement is, it cannot be taken in com­
plete isolation from Dostoevsky's literary expressions. As Ralph Harper
notes, "In spite of the superficial orthodoxy of Dostoevsky, he, not Nietz­
sche, was the first to outline the consequences of the absence of God and
immortality." One need not accept Harper's evaluation of Dostoevsky's
orthodoxy to acknowledge that no one could describe this absence so viv­
idly and sensitively unless he had in some fashion experienced it. This an­
guished ambiguity is, in my view, the inevitable condition of those attempt­
ing to be responsive to contemporary thought and experience while
themselves believing in God and personal immortality.