GORDON PETTIT

ARE WE RARELY FREE? A RESPONSE TO RESTRICTIVISM

(Received 18 July 2001)

ABSTRACT. Arguments for Restrictivism – the position that we are rarely free – have been proposed by incompatibilists Peter van Inwagen and David Vander Laan among others. This article is concerned much more with these arguments than with quantifying the frequency of free actions. There are two general ways to argue for restrictivism. First, one may take a Negative Strategy, arguing that the situations in which one is *not* free are common and predominant. Second, one may focus on situations in which one is apparently free, and argue directly that these situations are rare – the Inventory Strategy. I conclude that both types of arguments for restrictivism are unconvincing.

INTRODUCTION

Suppose that we are free creatures, and this freedom includes the ability to do otherwise. How common is our ability to act freely? Some incompatibilists have argued for restrictivism – the position that the ability to do otherwise is rare.[1] When quantifying the rarity of freedom, restrictivists have suggested that individuals may act freely only a few times a week or at most during a few dozen brief moments in a day.[2] This article is concerned much more with the (failure of) arguments for restrictivism than the actual frequency of free actions.

Arguments for restrictivism take the form of two general strategies. First, one may focus on the situations in which one is *not* free, and argue that these situations are common and predominant. Call this first approach the Negative Strategy. Various commitments of incompatibilism play an important role in developing arguments with the Negative Strategy. Second, one may focus on situations in which one is free, and argue directly that these situations are rare – the Inventory Strategy.[3] C.A. Campbell uses the Inventory Strategy, arguing that the only situations in which we are free are cases of moral temptation, and these are rare.[4] Peter van Inwagen has taken

both approaches, and links the Negative Strategy with Beta, a principle that he argues is essential for arguments for incompatibilism.[5] David Vander Laan also uses the Negative Strategy, but utilizes the "Actions Require Desire" principle, or ARD.[6] The arguments utilizing the Negative Strategy have been developed more thoroughly and presented more formally than those of the Inventory Strategy, and thus the former require greater attention to the details of the arguments.

Van Inwagen's argument for restrictivism utilizing the Negative Strategy is unsound because Beta is invalid. In Section I, it is argued that the most plausible ways to revise van Inwagen's argument for restrictivism – by using Beta-like principles that are valid – fail, and thus van Inwagen's argument based on the Negative Strategy gives the incompatibilist no special reason to affirm restrictivism. In Section II, Vander Laan's argument utilizing ARD is shown to be at best inconclusive, because there is good reason to doubt the truth of ARD and its suggested revision. Section III discusses briefly arguments utilizing the Inventory Strategy. The discussion surrounding the Inventory Strategy is primarily related to the phenomenology of freedom and is much less perspicuous. It is concluded that the Inventory Strategy also fails to provide a convincing argument for restrictivism. The article closes with a suggestion on how the debate concerning restrictivism should proceed, and with a consideration of some reasons why on might want restrictivism to be true, even if no good arguments have been given for it.

I. VAN INWAGEN AND RESTRICTIVISM

Van Inwagen argues that for three important types of actions, we do not have the ability to do otherwise. The types of unfree actions include actions that an agent x considers indefensible, actions which x has a strong unopposed desire to do, and actions in which it is obvious to x (at least upon reflection) what to do. Van Inwagen argues:

1)   If rule Beta-prime is valid, then I cannot perform an act I regard as indefensible.
      Where Beta-prime is Np, N(p $\supset$ q), therefore Nq

(Where Np is p, and x now has no choice about whether p, and '⊃' is the material conditional.)

2)   If rule Beta is valid, then rule Beta-Prime is valid.
(Where Beta is a more general forerunner of Beta-Prime.)

3)   Free will is incompatible with determinism only if Beta is valid.
(Because all plausible arguments for incompatibilism rely on Beta.)

Hence,

4)   If free will is incompatible with determinism, then I cannot perform an act I regard as indefensible.[7]

The argument for restrictivism continues with a progression of two other similar forms of arguments that emphasize situations in which an individual at a particular time lacks a choice. Van Inwagen argues as above for the claim that a subject, x is powerless over any action that she considers morally indefensible. A similar argument concludes that x is not capable of refraining from performing an action that x has a strong unopposed desire to do. One further modification produces an argument that concludes for any action A that x does with little or no deliberation – an action in which it is obvious, at least upon reflection, what to do – x does not have the ability to do otherwise. Since these three situations are pervasive, x rarely has the ability to do otherwise, and thus the incompatibilist is committed to restrictivism.

(The remainder of the discussion of van Inwagen's argument focuses on actions regarded as indefensible, but these arguments could be directed toward the other situations with relatively minor alterations.)

Premise 1) of van Inwagen's argument is supported by the following argument form, which is an instance of Beta-prime:

a)   If x regards A as indefensible, then x will not do A, and x now has no choice about that.

b)   X regards A as indefensible, and x now has no choice about that.

Therefore:

c)   X now has no choice about not doing A.

That is, x is not free with respect to A, and cannot do A.

Van Inwagen's argument for restrictivism as stated above does not get off the ground. The most significant problem is that premise 3) is false. It is false that free will is incompatible with determinism only if Beta is valid, for there are other Beta-like principles that both are valid and can be utilized in plausible arguments for incompatibilism.

Incompatibilism does not stand or fall with Rule Beta, and it is a good thing for the incompatibilists, for Rule Beta is invalid.[8] The invalidity of Rule Beta assures the truth of 2), but then its relevance is undercut.[9] There are at least three recently suggested principles that appear to be both effective in forming a sound argument for incompatibilism, and resistant to the problems that beset Beta and Beta-prime, and a brief argument for incompatibilism based on one of these principles is presented below.[10] Since the intent here is not to defend incompatibilism, but to discuss its relationship to restrictivism, a thorough defense of the arguments for incompatibilism that utilize these principles is not developed. Here, it is assumed that these principles may play an integral role in sound arguments for incompatibilism, though compatibilists (for various reasons) will likely find those arguments unconvincing.[11]

Although van Inwagen's argument for restrictivism fails due to the falsity of the third premise, it seems likely that it could be revised. The third premise, instead of putting its weight behind Rule Beta, could be modified to accommodate whatever principle it is that the incompatibilist is committed to.[12] So we have a formula for a revised third premise:

> 3*)   Some Beta-like principle φ is such that free will is incompatible with determinism only if φ is valid.

By specifying φ, appropriate modifications could be made to the rest of the argument, and van Inwagen's argument could be revised.

But the prospects of revising the argument in this way are not good. In fact, neither of two the most plausible candidates for φ available can be used as substitutes for Beta-prime in an argument for restrictivism.

First, consider Beta*[13]

> Mp, M(p $\supset$ q), therefore Mq
> (Where Mp is p, and there is nothing that x can do now that *might* lead to p's being false.)

The first premise of an argument for restrictivism, modified in terms of Beta* is:

1*)   If rule Beta* is valid, then I cannot perform an action I regard as indefensible.

The argument form supporting 1*) applies Beta* to acts regarded as indefensible:

a*)   X regards A as indefensible, and there is nothing that x can now do that might lead to that being false.

b*)   If x regards A as indefensible, then x will not do A, and there is nothing that x can now do that might lead to this conditional being false.

Therefore:

c*)   X will not do A, and there is nothing that x can now do that might lead to that being false.

That is, x is not free with respect to A, and x cannot do anything that might lead to x doing A.

Unlike Beta-prime, Beta* appears valid and may be useful for forming a sound incompatibilist argument; we assume the validity of Beta*.[14] Rather than questioning the validity of a step in the revised argument, I deny that most relevant instances of the argument form supporting 1*) (those cases in which x regards A as indefensible) are sound, since b*) is very often false. The restrictivist may want to restate b*) in order to include some other conditions in the antecedent which will increase its plausibility. This reflects van Inwagen's strategy in the presentation of his original argument for restrictivism, when he relies on conditions such as those stated in his C:

If X regards A as an indefensible act, given the totality of relevant information available to him, and if he has no way of getting further relevant information, and if he lacks any positive desire to do A and if he sees no objection to *not* doing A (again given the totality of relevant information available to him), *then* X is not going to do A.[15]

Suppose we assume similar conditions when evaluating b*).

Even when all of those types of conditions are built into the situation, it is possible to have the conditions fulfilled at some point,

and one *acquire* a desire to do A, and do A, and b*) is not universally true.[16] The restrictivist may agree, but with a caveat: Upon reflection, I concede that possibly, b*) is not universally true. Very rarely and only in bizarre circumstances, an instantiation of b*) may be false, but nearly all of the instantiations of b*) are true. And if most instantiations of b*) are true, then most instantiations of the argument form for 1*) are sound. So only very rarely will someone be able to do something that he regards as indefensible, and restrictivism in supported.[17]

But most instantiations of b*) are not true. Premise b*) is easily falsified due to the 'might' clause in the premise. There is very frequently something that x can do that *might* lead to the conditional being false. Consider in indefensible action, such as tripping a nun merely to show that one was free and above the mores of society. I may just be sitting on a bench as a nun walks my way, and due to a bizarre quantum fluctuation in my brain, a desire to do the indefensible and trip the nun may just pop into my mind. I can sit there, and the fluctuation *might* happen (at least something like it is possible) and if it were to happen, it *might* lead to the conditional being false. Since I *can* very often just sit there on the bench (or do any number of similar mundane activities) b*) is very often false. The "might" clause is an essential aspect of the incompatibilist principle because it assures its validity, yet it also serves to render the principle useless for a revised argument proposed by a restrictivist.

In responding to the above argument, Randolph Clarke has suggested that the 'might' of Beta* should not be taken to express logical possibility.[18] If it did, then the 'might' in the corresponding inference rule that is utilized in the argument for incompatibilism should also express logical possibility. But then the corresponding premises in that argument regarding the fixity of the past and the fixity of the laws will be false, since there is something that some human agent can now do such that it is logically possible that she do that and the laws be different.

Suppose that Clarke is right and the 'might' of Beta* should not be taken to express logical possibility. A plausible alternative is that the 'might' expresses nomological possibility. This sense of might allows a sound argument for incompatibilism, but cannot be used

for a sound argument for restrictivism. Consider how an argument for incompatibilism utilizing Beta* might look:[19]

- Let L be a true proposition, the conjunction of all the laws of nature.
- Let P be a true proposition about the total state of the world at a time in the distant past.
- Let R be a true proposition about any action A that a person x performs.
- Let Mp be p and there is nothing that x can do now that might lead to p being false.
- Let $\square$ be logical necessity.

> If determinism is true, then i) $\square$ ((L & P) $\supset$ R).
> From i) it follows that ii) $\square$ (L $\supset$ (P $\supset$ R)).
> Then iii) M (L $\supset$ (P $\supset$ R)).
> (Since there is nothing that x can do now that might lead to a logical truth being false.)
> But iv) M L.
> So v) (from Beta* M (P $\supset$ R).
> But vi) M P.
> Therefore (again from Beta*) vii) M R.

So if determinism is true, then x does A, and there is nothing that x can do now that might lead to that being false. Since A is any action that x performs, and x is any person, determinism is incompatible with freedom.

Premise iv) and premise vi) are the controversial premises and compatibilists will likely deny one or both. As stated above, these premises are not defended here, but they are commonly affirmed and defended by incompatibilists. Suppose that in premise iv), the 'might' in M L is taken to express nomological possibility. Then it would read: "The proposition of the conjunction of all the laws of nature is true, and there is nothing that x can do now such that it is nomologically possible that x do that and the proposition of the conjunction of all the laws of nature is false." This appears to be universally true, and would probably be affirmed by most incompatibilists. Similarly, premise vi) would read "A proposition about the total state of the world at a time in the distant past is true, and there is nothing that x can do now such that it is nomologically possible that

x do that and the proposition about the total state of the world at a time in the distant past is false." The most plausible way of denying this proposition involves what many consider logically impossible – time travel. The remaining use of 'can' in the premise should be understood in its normal sense, and I know of no one who can travel to the distant past. Again, the premise is likely affirmed by most incompatibilists. But suppose that in the corresponding premise of the revised argument of restrictivism, b*, the 'might' is also taken to express nomological possibility: "If x regards A as indefensible, then x will not do A, and there is nothing that x can do now such that it is nomologically possible that x do that and this conditional is false." This premise is very often false as shown by the illustration involving the nun. It is nomologically possible that I remain seated, and the idea of tripping the nun just pops into my mind (due to an unfortunate quirk in my psychological state), which may in turn be followed by my tripping the nun. If the 'might' of Beta* is interpreted in a way that is broadly acceptable to incompatibilists, it will not be useful for an argument of restrictivism. Clarks's worries are alleviated.

Another principle that appears to be useful for constructing an incompatibilist argument is Delta, which is Beta with the added premise of determinism. Assume the truth of determinism; then Nq follows from Np and N(p $\supset$ q) (where Nq is q and no one has or had a choice about q). The same intuition that motivates Beta motivates Delta, however Delta (unlike Beta) is not readily shown invalid.[20] But Delta is not useful for an argument for restrictivism, for the restrictivist intends to show that the ability to do otherwise is rare independently of whether the thesis of determinism is true.[21]

The proponent of an argument of the type van Inwagen presents faces a dilemma. Either the crucial Beta-like principle is such that it is valid and useful for an argument for incompatibilism, but not for an argument for restrictivism, or if formulated so that it is useful for an argument for restrictivism in the relevant respects, then it is susceptible to counterexamples of the type Mckay and Johnson describe. Even if there is a single Beta-like principle that the incompatibilist is committed to, it is very likely more similar to Beta* or Delta then to Beta. Since Beta* and Delta are not useful in forming a sound argument for restrictivism, van Inwagen's Negative

Strategy fails to provide a good reason for the incompatibilist to be a restrictivist.[22]

II. VANDER LAAN AND RESTRICTIVISM

David Vander Laan's argument for restrictivism assumes the truth of incompatibilism, and utilizes ARD, which states no agent ever performs an action unless, shortly beforehand, the agent has some desire to perform that action.[23] If ARD is true, then in situations in which we have no desire to do otherwise, we are not free. If we are not free in situations in which we have no desire to do otherwise, then we are rarely free.

Vander Laan begins by reviewing a dispute between co-authors Fischer and Ravizza and van Inwagen. At issue in the dispute is the frequency that one has the capacity to develop alternative motives or desires to perform an action that one has no initial desire to perform. Vander Laan argues that the dispute may be sidestepped in favor of the restrictivist. He reflects on a situation, answering the phone, in which it seems that we often do not act freely, since we rarely have a desire to do otherwise. He grants that on some rare occasions, we may freely answer the phone, but most often we do not act freely when answering the phone because we usually have no countervailing desires. Through a regress argument, he then argues that the situations in which we have a desire to do otherwise than what we do are rare, and the situations in which we have a desire to generate a desire to do otherwise are also are, and so on.[24] He argues that answering the phone is typical for our lives, and the vast majority of our quotidian experiences are those in which we cannot do otherwise. Thus if incompatibilism is correct, and the ability to do otherwise is necessary for freedom, we are rarely free. Fischer and Ravizza's strategy of appealing to our capacity to generate desires seems incapable of avoiding the force of Vander Laan's argument, for those situations are rare.[25]

Vander Laan suggests various strategies of responding to his argument for restrictivism; here the discussion is limited to two. First, there is reason to reject ARD, or at least to clarify what it means. One concern is related to the significance that Vander Laan places on desires. Values, beliefs, duties, and other motivations that

are not readily described as desires play a more significant role in action than ARD seems to allow, while desires do not seem essential for all actions. We often say things such as "I didn't want to go to the meeting, but I did," or "I didn't feel like working out, but I did anyway." Such statement are *prima facie* inconsistent with ARD. Some paraphrase of these statements or a revision of ARD is in order if these types of statements are compatible with ARD.

Vander Laan could claim that these denials should not be understood to imply that all desire is lacking in those circumstances described. One may have a desire to fulfill one's duties or a desire to maintain an exercise program, and these desires precede the action, so ARD is consistent with these common claims. Yet some who are concerned about developing a theory of action maintain that there are cases in which a desire to act may not precede the action, and their reasoning is plausible.[26] It is at least initially plausible to think that there really is no desire to go to the meeting or to work out when such a desire is verbally denied. Even if they are more rare than common claims may imply, it seems that there are at least some cases where the desire to act does not precede the action. Fischer and Ravizza's earlier responses to restrictivism are relevant here, when they claim that it may be possible to do something irrational – something that one has no desire to do – such as when Augustine stole the pear. If these types of situations occur, then ARD is false.

But suppose that those situations that call into question the truth of ARD involve some desire to do one thing (e.g. skip the work out), and some desire to do something else (e.g. fulfill one's commitment to exercise). The restrictivist would say that if so, there is no reason to doubt ARD. Furthermore, these situations of conflicting desires that allow the ability to do otherwise are rare, and restrictivism is unscathed.

This brings us to the "weak desires strategy" of responding to Vander Laan's arguments.[27] The weak desires strategy questions the empirical assertions of the restrictivist. Instead of most often having uniform desires, the weak desires strategist claims that we frequently have conflicting desires, even if one desire dominates. The presence of conflicting desires, even among weak ones, allows us freedom in many more situations than those described by the restrictivist. For example, even in situations involving answering

the phone, it may *often* be the case that one has a desire to refrain from answering (phone calls rarely come at convenient times). Situations of conflicting desires are not rare, thus, freedom may be more common than the restrictivist claims. Vander Laan concludes that this line of reasoning poses ". . . [one of] the most promising lines for the non-restrictive incompatibilist."[28]

And so it does. In response to the weak desires strategy, Vander Laan proposes ARD*: "No agent ever performs an action unless, shortly beforehand, the agent has some desire to perform that action, and that desire is stronger than any desire the agent has to do what the agent thinks would prevent the action."[29] An implication of ARD* is that even if a person *often* has some small desire to refrain from answering when the phone rings, as it seems is the case, these situations of weakly opposing desires usually are not strong enough to allow the capacity to do otherwise, and do not give us reason to reject restrictivism. Thus if ARD* is true, the weak desires strategy fails.

ARD* is a complex principle; we must be careful in evaluating it. Consider the attributes of ARD*. It is a compound conditional with a triple negative and includes a prepositional attitude and a temporal component. Drawing out implications of ARD* is not a straightforward task. A revision removing "unless" makes the conditional structure more clear:

> ARD*′: If an agent does not have a desire to perform an action shortly beforehand, or that desire is not stronger than any desire the agent has to do what the agent thinks would prevent the action, then the agent will not perform the action.

By contraposition and DeMorgan's Law, we may eliminate some of the negatives.

> ARD*″: If an agent performs an action, then the agent has a desire to perform that action shortly beforehand, and that desire is stronger than any desire the agent has to do what the agent thinks would prevent the action.
> (Since ARD*″ is logically equivalent of ARD*, we need not continue to differentiate the two when discussing their implications.)

One implication of ARD* is unsettling for Kantians, for if ARD* is true, then it would be impossible to act from duty unless fulfilling that duty was at least consistent with one's strongest desire. If ARD* is true, then it seems impossible to have a morally valued action on a Kantian account of moral value. So much the worse for Kantians, the restrictivist might reply.

Another problem hits closer to home for the restrictivist. It seems that if ARD* is true, then it may be used in a regress argument – similar to the one Vander Laan proposes – that concludes we are *never* free. ARD* provides a crucial premise in a common type of argument that concludes that freedom is impossible. Along with ARD* and incompatibilism, only one significant additional premise is needed for an argument against freedom. The premise is plausible for incompatibilists:

One is not free with respect to one's current desires.

According to ARD*, if a person P does A, then shortly before doing A, P has a stronger desire to do A than any desire P has to do an action that P thinks would prevent A. Suppose that P does A at time t2, and in retrospect, P wonders if she was acting freely in doing A. If incompatibilism is correct, then the capacity to refrain from doing A is necessary for being free in doing A. If P is not free with respect to her current desires and P does A, then shortly before doing A (at t1), P's strongest desire was to do A, and P was not free to have a stronger desire to do other than A at t1. The only way to be free with respect to A (to have been able to do something other than A) is to have been free to direct one's desires at t1, so that the desire to do other than A may be increased. Let A′ be the ability to increase one's desires at t1 to do something other than A at t2. If one is free with respect to A, then one must be free with respect to A′. Being free with respect to A′ will of course have similar preconditions as did A, and will include the ability to alter one's desires with respect to A′ at a time prior to t1. This is the freedom to do A″. An insurmountable regress is on, and thus P is not free with respect to A. Since A is any action, an implication of ARD* is that no agent is *ever* free. Although never being free is logically consistent with restrictivism, the arguments for restrictivism are moot if we are never free.

The above argument will certainly raise objections, and for those who think that we are sometimes free (as Vander Laan does), there

are some fairly obvious ways to respond to the regress argument against freedom. But there is a significant downside for the restrictivist. In responding to the regress argument against freedom, the restrictivist must make claims that will undercut the arguments for restrictivism based on the Negative Strategy and the use of ARD or ARD*. The restrictivist could claim that we sometimes have desires of similar strengths so that sometimes there is no strongest desire, which may allow freedom. Cases of conflicting desires with no desire of clear supremacy may allow freedom, though this approach would require a minor revision of ARD*, allowing for action is situations where there is no strongest desire. Or the restrictivist could deny the added premise about one's control over desire, and argue that under some circumstances, agents may alter their current desires and subsequently be able to do otherwise. This move would allow for free actions, even if those actions are rare. While both of these responses are open to the restrictivist, they come with significant dialectical consequences. If either or both responses are taken, then in order to resolve the issue of restrictivism, we are forced into the second general strategy – the Inventory Strategy of examining situations of conflicting motivations in which it seems that we are free, and determining whether they are rare or not. Thus either Vander Laan's Negative Strategy fails outright by committing the restrictivist to the claim that there is no freedom at all, or in avoiding this charge, it collapses into the Inventory Strategy. Let us suppose that it reduces to the Inventory Strategy.

III. THE INVENTORY STRATEGY

Van Inwagen uses an Inventory Strategy for proposing an argument for restrictivism. He gives what he considers an exhaustive list of three types of situations in which it is not obvious what to do, even upon reflection. Of these, he claims that at most two types of actions are those in which we are free and have the ability to do otherwise: when we are faced with choosing among conflicting positive values, and when our general policy of behavior conflicts with momentary desires. He argues that these circumstances are rare, thus our freedom is rare. Campbell's and Vander Laan's discussions of restrictivism make it apparent that they concur

with van Inwagen's assessment of the rarity these types of occur-rences.

Fischer and Ravizza have responded by arguing that the situ-ations in which we plausibly have the ability to do otherwise are much more common, and thus if we have free will, it is common.[30] Robert Kane has argued that we should include common situations involving efforts to sustain previously chosen values ("attentional" efforts – efforts to attend to certain memories or images in order to strengthen one's resolve), and other practical choices among instances of freedom.[31] Timothy O'Connor has also argued that our phenomenology favors a generous assessment of how often we have the ability to act freely.[32] I agree with Fischer, Ravizza, O'Connor and Kane that the situations involving the ability to do otherwise are common, though we need to specify what is meant by 'rare' and 'common'. It seems that situations of conflict among values, beliefs, desires, duties, hopes, etc., in which we are free are frequent – they may occur a few dozen times in a typical day; van Inwagen thinks that these situations are much less common, and may occur only a few times a week, if that. My disagreement with van Inwagen on this issue seems to be based on conflicting reports of personal experience and the phenomenology associated with what we consider free actions. Vander Laan emphasizes the fact that eve 30 or so episodes of freedom in a day make up a small proportion of one's waking hours, and should be considered rare.[33] Kane considers himself to line up on the side of restrictivism, yet he also thinks that free actions occur more frequently than van Inwagen suggests, and include ". . . common occurrences of everyday life and are far from rare."[34] Kane's rationale for siding with restrictivism is based on the Inventory Strategy, and his ultimate position is similar to Vander Laan's.

It is difficult to adjudicate arguments utilizing the Inventory Strategy, with various personal reports of how often it seems that we are free. In any case, a strong argument for restrictivism that takes the Inventory Strategy has yet to be presented. At best, the Inventory Strategy is inconclusive.

CONCLUSION

If we are merely counting, Campbell and van Inwagen report very few occurrences of freedom, Vander Laan and Kane take a more moderate restrictivist approach, with genuine alternatives presenting themselves more than a dozen, but less than a hundred times a day, while O'Connor, Fischer and Ravizza, and Hugh McCann think that episodes of freedom could be much more frequent.[35] One's position on restrictivism may come down to one's conception of what is rare or common. In any case, we have seen that specific commitments of incompatibilism do not provide the basis for good arguments for restrictivism – however 'rare' is defined. Maybe the debate should be restructured as a controversy over whether freedom comes in discrete opportunities or is a nearly continuous opportunity.[36] The incompatibilist may have good reason to think that genuine alternatives are available only under circumstances that are not continuously present. So the incompatibilist may have reason to affirm discrete freedom. The compatibilist, on the other hand, who appeals to the possibility of "breaking the laws of nature" (understood in a weak sense), has no reason to think that alternative opportunities are rare; they may occur at any waking moment, and possibly even during sleep.[37] This distinction needs more development, but it seems that progress could be made if the suggestion were pursued.

One final issue is the desirability of rarely having the ability to do otherwise. If one has a well-developed moral character, it seems that it would be desirable to *lack* alternatives in many situations.[38] It is desirable not to be frequently tempted to sway from one's positive values. One who is in constant turmoil over doing the right thing is not of great moral character. Should we hope that restrictivism, with some clear sense of "rare" turns out to be true? I respond with a cautious "yes." If one develops a character such that one is not tempted to lie for personal gain, it makes no sense to want to be free to lie for personal gain. But on the balance, we may still value the ability to do otherwise for creative reasons and to affirm our individuality. We may still want to be free to pursue a research project on moral responsibility or not, and we may still want to be free to take up golfing or bicycling or painting (or none of those things). While there is reason to value freedom especially in stages of moral

development and in relation to creativity, there is also reason to hope that freedom is restricted in some sense and comes in discrete opportunities.[39]

NOTES

[1] In the context of this paper, incompatibilism is the position that free will is incompatible with determinism. Most incompatibilists also claim that the ability to do otherwise is necessary for freedom, and this is an assumed commitment of incompatibilism as well.

[2] David Vander Laan (2001), p. 202.

[3] The Negative Strategy and the Inventory Strategy are not intended as mutually exclusive approaches, and some arguments have characteristics of both. The division is helpful for organizing criticisms of the arguments for restrictivism.

[4] C.A. Campbell (1951).

[5] Peter van Inwagen (1989). In earlier writings, his position on the frequency of freedom is less restrictive; see van Inwagen's (1983), p. 8. Rule Beta is Np, $N(p \supset q)$, therefore Nq, where Np is p and no one has or had a choice about p. Van Inwagen has defended the validity of Rule Beta vigorously until very recently, when he conceded that it is invalid, for reasons discussed below. See van Inwagen (2000), pp. 1–4. Van Inwagen has not given up restrictivism, despite conceding Rule Beta. As discussed below, it seems that restrictivism might be supported by the commitments of incompatibilism, even if Rule Beta is invalid.

[6] Vander Laan (2001), p. 201. ARD is discussed below.

[7] van Inwagen (1989).

[8] See Thomas J. McKay and David Johnson (1997), and Erik Carlson (2000).

[9] Rule Beta-prime is valid if Rule Beta is, but Rule Beta is not valid. So an impetus for accepting Rule Beta-prime has been eliminated. And in fact, Beta-prime is invalid, as shown by the same reasoning process used to show the invalidity of Beta. Rule Beta-prime states that from Nx, p and $Nx(p \supset q)$, deduce Nx, q, where Nx, p is 'p and x now has no choice about whether p'. The coin toss story of McKay and Johnson similarly leads one to the conclusion that Beta-prime is invalid. It is a logical truth that $(p \supset (q \supset (p\&q)))$, and since no one now has a choice about logical truths, $Nx(p \supset (q \supset (p\&q)))$ for all x. Suppose I hold a coin in my hand, I can flip the coin. The coin is not (now) heads, and it is not (now) tails. Let p be: the coin is not heads, and q: the coin is not tails. Then it is true that NI, p and also that NI, q, and with these truths, it can be deduced from Beta-prime that $NI(p\&q)$. But $NI(p\&q)$ is false, for I now have a choice about whether p & q is true. I could toss the coin now, and it would land heads or it would land tails. So Beta-prime is invalid, and cannot be used to form a sound argument for restrictivism.

[10] See Alicia Finch and Ted A. Warfield (1998), McKay and Johnson (1997), Timothy O'Connor (1993), David Widerker (1987), and Erik Carlson (2000). The

three principles that I have in mind include Beta* and Delta, both discussed here, and a principle that includes a necessity operator, proposed by Widerker.

[11] See Thomas Flint (1987).

[12] Here, we assume something essential to van Inwagen's argument form – that the incompatibilist is committed to some Beta-like principle in order to construct a plausible incompatibilist argument.

[13] See McKay and Johnson (1997) and Carlson (2000).

[14] The type of counterexample to Beta and Beta-prime described by McKay and Johnson will not work for Beta*, due to the 'might' clause. The other principle considered here (Delta) is also resistant to a 'coin flip' counterexample; see note 20 below.

[15] van Inwagen (1989), p. 407.

[16] See Fischer and Ravizza (1992), pp. 423–451. Since assuming that actions require desire is more conducive to the restrictivist position, the arguments here make this presumption. Reasons for rejecting this claim are discussed below.

[17] This type of response was suggested by van Inwagen (1994). See also O'Connor (2000). O'Connor responds in turn by arguing that even if the restrictivist is correct that doing the indefensible is rarely an option, that implies only that one of many possible alternatives has been eliminated, and it is still possible that an agent in those circumstances has an ability to take other alternatives. O'Connor seems to be correct on this point, but his claims are less convincing when applied to van Inwagen's argument about situations in which it is obvious what to do. Unlike O'Connor's response, the argument developed here not only provides a convincing response to cases involving indefensible actions but is equally applicable to the other circumstances addressed in van Inwagen's Negative Strategy.

[18] From Randolph Clarke's very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

[19] See van Inwagen (1983), pp. 93–95.

[20] The principle Delta is suggested by McKay and Johnson, but they also claim that their style of counterexample with a coin toss that shows the invalidity of Beta may also show Delta is invalid (McKay and Johnson, 1997, p. 118). Carlson also argues that Delta may be shown invalid (2000). I consider Delta here because I believe that they are wrong in concluding that Delta is invalid. The counterexamples that they suggest (which utilize a coin toss, as mentioned above), include the supposition that a person did not toss a coin, but could have. Yet since determinism is assumed to be true, if one further assumes that one did not toss a coin but could have, then one assumes that the ability to do otherwise is compatible with determinism. An incompatibilist need not be swayed by any alleged counterexample to her principle that *assumes* the falsity of her position. (This point was suggested by Ted Warfield.)

[21] Furthermore, if the truth of determinism is assumed, then the incompatibilist will not claim that the ability to do otherwise is *rare*, but that there is *never* an ability to do otherwise.

[22] See Timothy O'Connor (2000), pp. 101–107. O'Connor argues against van Inwagen's restrictivism, but he does not address the principles behind van Inwagen's more formal arguments of the Negative Strategy, and instead primarily addresses the phenomenological claims that are more relevant for the Inventory Strategy, discussed in Section III.

[23] Vander Laan (2001), p. 201.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

[25] As described in Fischer and Ravizza (1996).

[26] See Michael Zimmerman (1996), especially p. 217, and Hugh McCann (1997), pp. 222–224.

[27] Vander Laan (2001), pp. 211–212.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 214.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] See Fischer and Ravizza (1992, 1996).

[31] Robert Kane (1996), pp. 152–160. Apparently, Kane intends these situations to include the ability to do otherwise; it is clear that they are conceived as free actions.

[32] O'Connor (2000), pp. 101–107.

[33] Vander Laan (2001), p. 202.

[34] Robert Kane (2000), pp. 73–74.

[35] Campbell (1951), van Inwagen (1989, 1994), Vander Laan (2001), pp. 202–206, Kane (1996), pp. 152–160, and (2000), pp. 73–74, Fischer and Ravizza (1992, 1996), O'Connor (2000), pp. 101–107, McCann (1997), pp. 226–231.

[36] This suggestion arose in conversation with David Vander Laan.

[37] I have in mind the position described by David Lewis (1981), p. 113.

[38] The value of restricted options may be traced at least to Aristotle, and was suggested in response to a presentation of an earlier version of this paper.

[39] I am grateful to Peter van Inwagen, Ted Warfield, David Vander Laan, Randolph Clarke, Alicia Finch, Robert Kane, Philip Quinn, and David Haugen for their very helpful feedback on earlier versions of this article.

REFERENCES

Campbell, C.A. (1951): 'Is Freewill a Pseudo-Problem?' *Mind* 60, 441–465.

Carlson, E. (2000): 'Incompatibilism and the Transfer of Power Necessity', *Nous* 34(2), 277–290.

Finch, A. and Warfield, T.A. (1998): 'The Mind Argument and Libertarianism', *Mind* 107, 515–528.

Fischer, J.M. and Ravizza, M. (1992): 'When the Will is Free', in J.E. Tomberlin (ed.), *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 6 (pp. 423–451), Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing.

Fischer, J.M. and Ravizza, M. (1996): 'Free Will and the Modal Principle', *Philosophical Studies* 83(3), 213–230.

Flint, T. (1987): 'Compatibilism and the Argument from Unavoidability', *Journal of Philosophy* 84, 423–440.

Kane, R. (1996): *The Significance of Free Will*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Kane, R. (2000): 'Free Will and Alternative Possibilities', *Philosophical Perspectives, Volume 14, Action and Freedom* (pp. 56–79), Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Lewis, D. (1981): 'Are We Free to Break the Laws?' *Theoria* XLVII, 113–121.

McCann, H. (1997): 'On When the Will is Free', in G. Holmstrom-Hintikka and R. Tuomela (eds.), *Contemporary Action Theory*, Vol. 1 (pp. 219–232), Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

McKay, T.J. and Johnson, D. (1997): 'A Reconsideration of an Argument Against Compatibilism', *Philosophical Topics* 24(2), 113–122.

O'Connor, T. (1993): 'On the Transfer of Necessity', *Nous* 27(2), 204–218.

O'Connor, T. (2000): *Persons and Causes*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Van Inwagen, P. (1983): *An Essay on Free Will*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Van Inwagen, P. (1989): 'When is the Will Free?' in J.E. Tomberlin (ed.), *Philosophical Perspectives. 3, Philosophy of Mind and Action Theory* (pp. 399–422), Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing Co.

Van Inwagen, P. (1994): 'When the Will Is Not Free', *Philosophical Studies* 75(1–2), 95–113.

Van Inwagen, P. (2000): 'Free Will Remains a Mystery', *Philosophical Perspectives, Volume 14 Action and Freedom* (pp. 1–19), Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Vander Laan, D. (2001): 'A Regress Argument for Restrictive Incompatibilism', *Philosophical Studies* 103(Issue 2), 201–215.

Widerker, D. (1987): 'On an Argument for Incompatibilism', *Analysis* 47, 37–41.

Zimmerman, M. (1996): 'Responsibility Regarding the Unthinkable', in P.A. French, T.E. Uehling, Jr. and H.K. Wettstein (eds.), *Midwest Studies in Philosophy, Volume XX: Moral Concepts*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Philosophy and Religious Studies
Western Illinois University
Macomb, IL 61455
USA
E-mail: g-pettit@wiu.edu