

ARTICLE

# On Being a Fan and on Fanhood and Its Implications for Defeating the Moral Sceptic

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## Abstract

I employ the notion of fanhood to object to David Gauthier's Dependency Thesis, according to which, if a disposition is rationally required to adopt, so too are the acts expressing it. I first establish that fanhood is a commitment relevantly similar to a moral commitment. I then argue that, because genuine fanhood characteristically issues in inherently irrational behaviours in the form of 'luck charms,' or, superstitious practices fans believe will help their team win, it poses a decisive objection to the Dependency Thesis, thereby eliminating a promising attempt to defeat the moral sceptic.

## Résumé

J'emploie la notion de partisanerie, telle qu'elle est employée dans le domaine des sports (fanhood), pour m'opposer à la thèse de la dépendance de David Gauthier, selon laquelle s'il est rationnellement requis d'adopter une disposition, les actes qui l'expriment sont eux aussi rationnellement requis. J'établis d'abord que la partisanerie est un engagement assez similaire à un engagement moral. Je soutiens ensuite que, parce que la véritable partisanerie se caractérise par des comportements intrinsèquement irrationnels tels que l'emploi de « porte-bonheur » ou l'adoption de pratiques superstitieuses qui, selon le supporter, aideront son équipe à gagner, cela soulève une objection décisive à la thèse de la dépendance, éliminant ainsi une tentative prometteuse de venir à bout du scepticisme moral.

**Keywords:** commitment; Dependency Thesis; fanhood; Gauthier; luck charms; moral sceptic

In *Morals by Agreement* (1986), David Gauthier proposes a defeat of scepticism about acting morally that is unique and important. Instead of trying to show that every morally required act is rationally required because in one's self-interest, Gauthier's contention is that we can defeat this sceptic by both demonstrating the rationality of adopting a moral disposition and defending the Dependency Thesis, according to which the rationality of the acts that a disposition issues in is entailed by the rationality of that disposition.<sup>1</sup> Morally required acts inherit their rationality from the

<sup>1</sup> Gauthier himself did not dub the Dependency Thesis as such. See Superson (1990). Campbell (1988, p. 199) uses the notion of the acts expressing the disposition they come from.

disposition. Although many other objections to Gauthier's thesis have been made, I want to offer what I think is a decisive objection by way of the disposition of fanhood. Interestingly, many sports fans are as resolute about their fanhood as many of us believe we ought to be about our commitment to morality. My first aim in this article is to establish that fanhood is a commitment, and one similar in relevant respects to a moral disposition.<sup>2</sup> I argue further that deeply engaged fans characteristically acquire what I will call 'luck charms,' or, superstitious practices that they believe will help their team win. But luck charms are inherently irrational. If I am right that fanhood characteristically leads to inherently irrational acts even when it is itself rational, then we can construct a decisive objection to the Dependency Thesis and eliminate a promising attempt to defeat the moral sceptic. The second aim of this article is to defend this claim.<sup>3</sup>

## I. Fanhood as Commitment

### A. An Intuitive Sense of Fanhood as Commitment

We might initially balk at a comparison between a moral commitment and fanhood because morality concerns life and death matters and the state of commitment separates the saints from the sinners, whereas fanhood concerns frivolous matters and itself seems capricious. But there is an intuitive sense, having to do with the degree of committedness, that these dispositions are similar. I will tease out this intuition, and then develop my argument in the rest of this section.

For both morality and fanhood, there is a spectrum of loyalty and concomitant attitudes of praise and scorn that we identify with committedness. On one end of the moral spectrum is the moral flit who, unlike the weak-willed person who bails out when the demands of morality become too high, does not have the real will to be moral in the first place. The flit treats morality as dispensable, as something that can be dropped if something better comes along, like the person who drops his friends when they move away. The flit is comparable to Gauthier's prudent person who acts morally only when he can expect to benefit on the occasion (as described in Gauthier, 1967). The prudent person is at the lower end of the moral spectrum in that he lacks a commitment to morality, being prepared to abandon it whenever beneficial. Gauthier describes the 'moral' person as better than the prudent person because he will act morally on the particular occasion even when he does not expect to benefit. Nevertheless, he too falls short of the ideal moral person who is completely trustworthy, because the 'moral' person is trustworthy only insofar as he regards his *commitment* to morality as advantageous to him. Were the advantageousness of his commitment to prove false, say, because most others around him no longer act morally, he would be ready to drop his commitment. Both the 'moral' person and the prudent person are driven by self-interest; only the truly moral, or, trustworthy person has a genuine commitment to morality, making the relevant sacrifices to his self-interest even when they are great or when the entire system of morality breaks down

<sup>2</sup> I use the words 'commitment' and 'disposition' interchangeably for purposes of this article.

<sup>3</sup> Obviously, there are other attempts to defeat the sceptic about the rationality of acting morally, but here I focus on Gauthier's.

and no one else acts morally. Gauthier argues that rationality requires, under the right conditions, that we become trustworthy persons who act morally (Gauthier, 1967, pp. 473–474).<sup>4</sup>

Compare a commitment to morality to fanhood, whose paradigm I take to be a sports fan. Admittedly we use the word ‘fan’ loosely in reference to a multitude of diverse things, including country music, kale, Leonardo DiCaprio, or the colour purple, but these passive ways of being a ‘fan’ are better construed as expressions of mere likings, whereas fanhood in reference to sports seems to be an active commitment, requiring certain intentions and actions. A person might like country music, but it would be odd to say she failed in her ‘commitment’ if she listens to it only on a long road trip. Waxing and waning on satisfying one’s preferences is an individual choice, not a strike against one’s committedness.

Fanhood about sports is more like a commitment than a preference or fondness and has in common with morality a spectrum of degrees of commitment. On one end are fair-weather fans or ‘bandwagoners’ who support the team only when the going is good. Like moral flits and the prudent person who acts morally only when she expects to benefit, their commitment is not genuine, wavering with the team’s success and failure instead of staying the course over the long term. True fans, on the opposite end of the spectrum, remain steadfast in support of the team, keeping up with trades and statistics and following the games even when it requires sacrifices such as going to sports bars when you know you will be surrounded by fans who hate the team or scheduling job interviews around games. True fans understand fanhood to require following through with a certain course of action rather than being a mere verbal gesture. They frown upon fair-weather fans’ disingenuous displays of their alleged commitment to the team (e.g., Facebook ‘selfies’ and exuberant celebrations at the victory parade) as behaviours they did not earn the right to engage in. I will focus on true fans.

The intuition I want to support is that the wholehearted deeply engaged fan has a commitment that is relevantly analogous to the commitment of a genuinely moral person.

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<sup>4</sup> In this discussion, I am using Gauthier’s terminology from his 1967 article that can be seen as a precursor to *Morals by Agreement*. Gauthier describes the trustworthy person as one who commits himself to morality come what may, presumably because he internalizes morality. I understand Gauthier to develop this idea in *Morals by Agreement*. His argument for the rationality of constrained maximization (Gauthier’s rational moral disposition) depends on there being enough others similarly disposed, on people being sufficiently ‘translucent’ so that their dispositions are fairly easily detected, and on the claim that constrained maximizers have a higher expectation than straightforward maximizers (who aim to maximize their immediate self-interest on each occasion) of being included in future self-beneficial interactions. It would seem that constrained maximization is a conditional disposition such that if any of these conditions were unmet, this disposition would no longer be rational. However, in *Morals by Agreement*, Gauthier proposes the idea that the truly moral person is the ‘liberal individual,’ one of whose capacities is an emotional or affective capacity that enables her to see her life in a social context made possible through interaction with others. She comes to value participation and her fellow participators, and in doing so she values the constraints that make participation possible (Gauthier, p. 347). Gauthier is suggesting that the ideal moral person internalizes morality and would be like the trustworthy person who treats morality unconditionally. Here I focus on his argument for the *rationality* of a moral disposition and the acts that it expresses.

## **B. Some Differences between a Moral Commitment and Fanhood**

The reader is likely still haunted by the objection that fanhood is too dissimilar to a moral commitment for the analogy to get off the ground. Of course, if fanhood is not even a commitment, the Dependency Thesis does not apply to it, but it may not apply if it is a commitment too unlike a moral one. Gauthier himself is interested in establishing the Dependency Thesis for a moral commitment since his project is to defeat the moral sceptic. But he also applies it to a country's intention to disarm its nuclear weapons, and I believe he understands it to apply to commitments, dispositions, and intentions more generally.<sup>5</sup> The similarities between a moral disposition and fanhood are interesting in their own right, but I examine them also to undermine the objection that their dissimilarities would block the threat that fanhood and irrational acts that express it make against the Dependency Thesis. For I find this threat to be fatal to the Dependency Thesis. In this section, I argue that none of the dissimilarities between fanhood and a moral disposition undercuts the analogy. In Section C, I will discuss some main features of a commitment and argue that fanhood is not only a commitment but is relevantly similar to a moral commitment.

### **i. The Nature of the Commitment**

As mentioned, an obvious difference between fanhood and a commitment to morality is that sports such as football and baseball are just games, whereas morality concerns much more serious matters, such as people's well-being and lives. Nobody dies or suffers harm to their well-being if people are not true fans, but they can and do if people do not commit to morality and act accordingly.

While there is no denying the importance of morality, this objection speaks to the *object* of the commitment, not its *nature*, which is the point of comparison. We have commitments about many things, some serious, others light-hearted, but about each we can be either staunchly committed or flit-like.

Still, the analogy might be challenged by the difference in the *kind* of commitments at issue, some of which Cheshire Calhoun (2009) explains in her article, "What Good Is Commitment," where she offers an analysis of commitment that I will use in my account of fanhood. For Calhoun, a commitment to morality is a normative one, which she defines as a commitment to a particular value or practical principle. A substantive commitment, in contrast, is part of a life plan, gives shape to a life, and defines a person's identity. Examples are commitments to particular projects, relationships, social identities, and ways of life (Calhoun, 2009, p. 614). A commitment to morality can, I believe, be both a normative and a substantive commitment since it gives shape to a person's life and defines her identity. Fanhood counts as a substantive commitment since it is a commitment to a team and shapes the identity and life of a true fan. Fanhood might also be an attitudinal commitment, which Calhoun takes to be a commitment that is grounded in the emotions and desires of the agent, particularly love or relatively intense caring (Calhoun, 2009, p. 631). Calhoun says that to be attitudinally committed to some aim is to be disposed to act on that commitment unstintingly and ungrudgingly (Calhoun, 2009,

<sup>5</sup> This is understood in the literature on counterexamples to the Dependency Thesis. See Parfit's (1984) case of Kate, Kavka's (1983) toxin puzzle, and Superson (1990).

p. 631). Examples include marital commitments and commitments to one's children and religion. Fanhood involves intense caring, and the true fan persists in her fanhood through decades of non-championship years with hope for, rather than animosity toward, her team. The difference in commitments lies with a commitment's end, its basis, or the role it plays in one's life, none of which makes fanhood or a moral commitment any less of a commitment. The kind of commitment, like the object of the commitment, does not diminish a commitment's status. Fanhood is a commitment just in the way that a moral commitment is, despite the obvious differences in their objects and the kind of commitment each is.

### *ii. Self-Sacrificial v. Self-Interested Commitments*

Fanhood might be different from a moral commitment because it is more fun to have and to keep, while a moral commitment is hard work to have and to keep since it requires many sacrifices to one's self-interest.

Given the daunting nature of many moral commitments — they reflect the moral theory a person adopts, including ones that require sacrificing one's life for the greater good — we might think this is true, but fanhood can be pretty daunting when one's team frequently loses. The history of sports provides numerous examples of teams for which one's fanhood is tested, but a well-known one is that of the Chicago Cubs, who had not won a World Series championship since 1908, but did in 2016, erasing the longest drought in baseball history. In 2003, many Cubs fans believed once again that this finally was 'the year.' But during the sixth game of the last playoff round, the infamous Steve Bartman incident occurred in which Bartman, a Cubs fan, reached over the stands to catch a souvenir foul ball away from the Cubs' left fielder, leaving the batter alive. The Cubs went on to lose that game and the next one. The heartbreaks, one might argue, counteract if not outweigh the thrills, especially if they occur frequently.

However, it seems to be the case that most of the time when we act morally, we sacrifice our self-interest, whereas being a fan even of a losing team promotes our self-interest. The main attraction and staying power of fanhood is that we like the game and enjoy watching our team, but we would be hard pressed to say that anyone acquires a moral commitment and acts on it because she finds it fun. Then again, once you are a true fan of a team, and the team has a losing streak spanning many seasons, remaining committed can be quite trying. A true fan does, shoring up her disposition and acting accordingly instead of doing things that are more entertaining. While morality may require her to sacrifice even her life, fanhood requires that she endure exceedingly boring and frustrating times that test her patience.

### *iii. Control*

Whether a team wins or loses is out of a fan's control. The fact that fanhood has a fan committing to something over which she has no control makes it an odd commitment, one unlike a moral commitment, since morality is in one's control in that it is in one's power to be morally good or immoral.

But there is a lot of luck in morality too. Whether one encounters many moral dilemmas in one's lifetime or finds oneself required to do the lion's share of sacrificing one's self-interest is largely a matter of luck. A fan commits to a team but does not

control its success; a moral person commits to morality but her response to moral situations — whether she builds her character when it is tested or goes to the dark side — is at least as much in her control as is a fan's response to her team's success, which could include rooting despite the team's loss. The objection that fanhood is different from a moral commitment because of luck confuses one's response, which refers to the commitment itself, with the object of the commitment, which refers to morality or a team and its 'operations.' My concern is with the former, and arguably the same level of luck is involved in both a moral commitment and fanhood. I will have more to say about control and fanhood in Section II.B.

#### *iv. Acquisition of a Commitment*

Another apparent difference between a moral commitment and fanhood is the way in which these dispositions are acquired. Our moral dispositions are at least partly a product of the way in which we are raised, and partly shaped by our own actions and reflection on the kind of persons we want to be. Acting kindly can help to shape a benevolent disposition; reflection gives us reasons for being morally disposed, and allows us to shore up our disposition when we make a mistake. Having reasons for being morally committed sets apart the morally committed person from the person who merely goes through the motions in acting morally. Being morally disposed is a complex arrangement of reasons, motives, actions, and so on, that are mutually reinforcing. John McDowell (1978) captures this notion in his well-known account of a virtuous person as one who sees things from a certain perspective that she gets by exercising sensitivity. This perspective allows her to know what to do in new, complex circumstances where the rules do not apply, and to see certain aspects of a situation as generating a reason for action that silences all other reasons. This perspective would have to be acquired over a lifetime and involves much fine-tuning between one's actions and the disposition one wants to have.

Compare acquiring a moral disposition to becoming a fan. Typically, we get turned on to a team by a relative's or friend's enthusiasm or by the general excitement in a winning season (van Schaik, 2012).<sup>6</sup> Fanhood tends to be grounded in geography — when you root for your team, you tend to root for your city or for a nearby city or same region of the country when your city lacks a team or is out of contention, sometimes even when the relevant team is a staunch rival (you appreciate their fans' fanhood). All in all, the way in which we become fans is pretty arbitrary, but the way that we acquire a commitment to morality is not.

Yet these differences can be mitigated. For one thing, being lured to a sports team for geographical reasons is no different from being lured by your own society's moral code in forming your moral disposition. It is unlikely that you would form a moral commitment to the ongoing moral code from another era, such as 1692 Salem Village, Massachusetts, or from a very different society, such as one that practices female genital mutilation. Moreover, acquiring true fanhood is more complex than I have described since it too involves having reasons, which undercuts its alleged

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<sup>6</sup> van Schaik (2012) cites Jeffrey James, who believes that children around 8 or 9 years of age are capable of developing emotional, long-term attachments to a team (or sport or particular athlete), and are influenced mainly by their families, the media, and their own participation in sports.

arbitrariness. Thomas van Schaik (2012) identifies eight motives or reasons for becoming a fan: eustress (positive stress), escape, entertainment, economics, aesthetics, group affiliation, self-esteem, and family needs.<sup>7</sup> A fan who merely goes through the motions and follows what other fans do without any reflection would be just as uncommitted as the person who had similar attitudes about morality. Calhoun notes that commitments are active: they involve reflection and endorsement of the end to which one is committed (Calhoun, 2009, p. 618). A true fan squares her commitment with her actions in the same way that the morally disposed person does, shoring it up when she falls short, I would say, over a lifetime. Thus, while we may be introduced to fanhood for escape and entertainment, actually acquiring fanhood is much like acquiring a moral disposition.

#### *v. The Priority of Morality*

Some commitments seem to be so important that if you lack them, you are a flit. A commitment to morality is one such commitment. Those who lack it treat others in ways subject to their discretion and flit between relationships because they cannot have genuine ones. An objector to my analogy between a moral commitment and fanhood might say that those who lack a moral commitment cannot have any commitments that involve seeing other people as indispensable since they lack the concept of having a moral commitment, which, as a minimum conception of morality, requires “giving equal weight to the interests of each individual affected by one’s own decision” (Rachels & Rachels, 2012, p. 13). A commitment to morality, then, is fundamental and logically prior to other commitments and undergirds a life with substance. Fanhood, though, is not basic in this way: it is neither logically prior to having other commitments nor to understanding commitment. Hence, the analogy fails.

For this comparison to be apt, we need to distinguish commitments that involve the way we treat other people from ones that do not. A commitment to take a daily walk, to pursue a hobby, and fanhood are examples of the latter. I believe that the relevant point of comparison between the two kinds of commitment is not the treatment of others but the ‘stick-to-it-ness’ or steadfastness in the face of challenges. A fundamental feature of any commitment is that its end binds one and requires that one not treat it — persons, one’s team, etc. — as dispensable. A moral commitment might well be fundamental and logically prior to other commitments involving not treating others as dispensable, such as a marriage commitment — a person who does not see that he needs to give equal weight to the interests of others affected by his decisions will not see that marriage cannot be one-sided about his own interests. But a moral commitment is not logically prior to a commitment to ends other than persons, including a commitment to a team — a moral schmuck, after all, might well be a true fan. It is not logically prior because, despite what the objection suggests, commitment per se is not a moral concept, but an issue of willpower. I would add that fanhood can serve to prepare you to stick with other ends, including morality,

<sup>7</sup> Science has shown that your team’s winning temporarily increases testosterone levels and perhaps improves the immune system, boosts mood, lowers suicide rates, and instills long-lasting pride. See Keilman and Bookwalter (2016, p. 6).



and can develop your capacity to be committed in general. It teaches you not to abandon your team in tough times, just as morality demands steadfastness in the face of a strong preference to satisfy your own interests. Neither kind of commitment is prior to or more fundamental than the other; both require sticking to their relevant ends.

So far, I have aimed to mitigate some important differences between a moral commitment and fanhood that might justify thinking of a moral commitment as sufficiently different from fanhood so that the Dependency Thesis does not apply to fanhood. I now turn to some main features of commitment and argue that fanhood, like a moral commitment, has these features.

### *C. Features of Commitment: How Morality and Fanhood Measure Up*

Calhoun's main thesis is that a life without commitments is not as bad as we might initially believe, since having intentions and provisional plans can do just as good a job as commitments at giving a person integrity, weaving a life narrative, and making her life go well. One's preference for commitments over intentions and provisional plans is a matter of choice. My main goal is not to critically assess Calhoun's argument for her thesis, but to use her analysis of commitments, which I find useful and with which I largely agree, to compare a moral commitment and fanhood, arguing that fanhood meets the criteria of being a commitment. I begin with some features of commitment she discusses.

#### *i. Commitments Shape a Life, Define an Identity, Explain What Life Is About (Calhoun, 2009, pp. 614, 627)*

Both moral dispositions and fanhood have these features. A morally disposed person sees things a certain way, sees certain things as mattering, and silences reasons for acting immorally. A fan identifies as a fan of a team, cares a lot about it, makes appropriate sacrifices to support it, and dons her team gear to show her loyalty. Persons lacking a moral compass and non-fans lack these features.

#### *ii. Commitments Are Typically Long-Term (Calhoun, 2009, p. 614)*

Calhoun notes that although commitments are typically long-term, they need not be. A short stint in cooking school can be a commitment all the same. But the commitments that give shape to a life typically are long-term ones. Both moral dispositions, which last a lifetime even if subject to continual tweaking, and fanhood, which, according to van Schaik, lasts from "the cradle to the grave," (van Schaik, 2012) meet the criterion of longevity.

#### *iii. Commitment Is a Species of Intention (Calhoun, 2009, p. 615)*

As mentioned, commitments are active: they are made, not merely discovered as facts about one's psychology, for the reasons that they are authored and persist through being sustained by the one committed.

Calhoun contrasts "passive commitments," which she believes are not really commitments but involuntary psychological attractions to pursue a project, with active, or genuine, commitments, which are voluntary and motivated by reasons (Calhoun, 2009, p. 617). I have already noted that both moral commitments and fanhood



involve reflection. Consider morality (though not Gauthier's version). A person does not just realize that she is morally disposed; rather, she has to work at it, being constantly tested by life circumstances. The morally committed person finds moral reasons compelling because she wants to persevere in her commitment. A fan also authors — rather than discovers — her true fanhood. Were she just to fall into fanhood (as opposed to having an interest in the team) because everyone else is watching the team, her fanhood would be fickle. A true fan has better reasons for wanting to be a fan, and she too wants to persevere in her commitment. Consider the true fan's typical initial response to a championship loss, which is to swear off her team and complain about falling behind on her life pursuits due to watching the games all season. She quickly, though, reasons her way through the loss, writing it off to factors such as its coming down to just one play, or the coach's sticking with the game plan rather than adjusting. Rather than giving up on her team, she appreciates the benefits that fanhood brings her, and shores up her commitment to the team, strengthening her belief that it will win the next year. A 'fan' who had a passive commitment would give up when the team lost because he is only merely attracted to the team but is not genuinely committed to it for non-fickle reasons.

#### *iv. Commitment Is an Intention to Engage Persistently*

For Calhoun, a commitment is not only “an intention to engage with something” but “a preparedness to see to it that the intention to engage persists” (Calhoun, 2009, p. 618). This cashes out as being prepared to take steps to revive your motivation to carry through if your interest fades, to avoid putting yourself in the way of temptation by things that conflict with your sustaining your commitment, and to resist reconsidering the reasons for having the commitment (Calhoun, 2009, pp. 618–619). (I will discuss the last point in the next subsection.) The deeper the commitment, the more you are prepared to do or to resist in order for your intention to persist, as in the case of a person who commits to losing weight and avoids walking past his favourite bakery on the way home, shops for groceries only after he has eaten, dines only with people who eat small portions, hangs pictures of his slimmer self on his refrigerator, and exercises when he feels stress.

Calhoun contrasts commitments with mere-intentions and provisional plans on the grounds that the former involve having a high degree of resistance to reconsideration.

But I think that both the commitment to morality and fanhood should be open to reconsideration of the reasons for having the commitment. Occasional — but not frequent — reconsideration can strengthen one's commitment. Reconsideration when the going gets rough in terms of one's commitment or when one does an occasional character check can remind one of the original reasons for committing or even supply additional reasons. Having new reasons for committing would not be odd in the case of life-long commitments because the person gains a new perspective as she goes through life with the commitment. A person who is committed to being healthy might first give up eating junk food and start exercising more, but as she goes through life with this commitment, she experiences the good effects that her healthy habits have on her body, which can serve to issue in more informed, if not different, reasons for her commitment.

I also take issue with Calhoun on the idea that a commitment entails avoiding temptation away from it. A morally committed person does not avoid moral dilemmas but faces them head on. One exception might be that of a morally good person who avoids making certain commitments such as a marriage vow because she worries that she might break them. But this shows that she takes commitments seriously and has the right moral attitude about people, wanting not to hurt them. Since she avoids these commitments for moral reasons, this does not count as avoiding temptation away from morality. Similarly, a fan of a sports team might never worry about moving to another city — even the rival one — because she knows that she will never be tempted to root for another team. If anything, since she likes the team, she will be worried about how she will watch the games, and will take steps to ensure that she can, such as contacting local sports bars about showing the games.

### *v. Commitments Require Surmounting Problems Rather than Reconsideration*

Consider some of the features that for Calhoun distinguish commitments from mere-intentions and provisional plans. Commitments “are intentions to follow through on *x* despite or in the face of developments that would, in the absence of commitment, make it rational to reconsider one’s mere-intentions or provisional plans” (Calhoun, 2009, p. 620). For commitments, “... one must be prepared to weather circumstantial and informational changes that would provide sufficient reason to alter mere-intentions and provisional plans. Just how committed one is depends on how much one is prepared to weather. At the far end are vows ... [such as] traditional marriage vows and religious vows, which ... require being prepared to weather virtually any possible circumstantial, epistemic, or attitudinal and value changes” (Calhoun, 2009, p. 620). Most important is Calhoun’s contention that “[t]o commit is to adopt a different policy toward unanticipated problems from the policy one would have adopted had one instead provisionally planned or merely intended” (Calhoun, 2009, p. 621, emphasis added). To commit is to surmount the problems rather than to reconsider one’s commitment. But Calhoun is careful to note that steadfastness does not entail that commitments depend on “deliberate blindness to reasons or irrationally discounting their force,” a point I will revisit in Section II (Calhoun, 2009, p. 620).

A moral commitment meets these criteria. Indeed, I believe that moral commitments are even stronger than the traditional marriage vow because one can without fault end a relationship that becomes abusive on the grounds of a right to self-defence and to secure one’s own well-being. A good moral code prohibits harmful behaviours and a committed person resolves to stick with it in the face of other unanticipated problems. Steadfastness, however, need not entail that a person never slip from morality. Marcia Baron’s (1984) well-known article on the Kantian moral motive explains that backsliding is compatible with even the strongest Kantian moral commitment. Baron understands the Kantian moral motive of acting for the sake of duty to be a life-long commitment to morality rather than a requirement to have duty at the forefront of one’s mind whenever one acts morally, just like a good driver’s commitment to brake at the appropriate times rather than to stop and think about braking each time one brakes. Backsliding is not ruled out not because the person really has a mere-intention or provisional plan rather than a commitment, but

because we are human and — in the course of our lives — we inevitably slip up, especially when morality becomes demanding. When a truly moral person realizes that she is backsliding to the extent that it interferes with her goal to be a moral person, she shores up her disposition rather than abandons her resolve. She remains committed because her intention is to surmount the problems rather than to reconsider her commitment.

Gauthier tries to capture this kernel of commitment, I believe, with his notion of the rationality of the disposition of the moral person, who, in *Morals by Agreement*, he calls the “constrained maximizer” (Gauthier, 1986, *passim*). The constrained maximizer compares the benefit of cooperating with what he expects to gain from universal non-cooperation and cooperates if the former provides him a greater expected utility than the latter (Gauthier, 1986, p. 167). Gauthier argues, via the Dependency Thesis, that a rational disposition issues in rational actions. He is keen on ‘rewarding’ the constrained maximizer by deeming him to be rational for not reconsidering his commitment on the occasion when he does not expect to benefit from acting on it; if he just acts from his disposition on these occasions, Gauthier believes that his action is rational in virtue of his commitment being rational.

Fanhood can be just like a moral commitment regarding surmounting problems rather than reconsidering one’s commitment. A true fan is prepared to weather certain circumstantial and informational changes. The team might lose repeatedly, season after season; we might discover that it cheated; the fan’s favourite player could be traded; the team might make many bad trades; the team might change uniforms to the fan’s least favourite colour; and so on. The true fan remains resilient in the face of these problems because her policy is to surmount them rather than to reconsider her commitment. Fanhood also is compatible with some backsliding: the true fan might have to miss a game here and there, but her intention is to not give up and she makes sure to get back on course. But, as with morality, fanhood standards are high, and the reasons for missing a game need to be good ones or one loses one’s status as a true fan. The fan who settles down and has a family and does things with his family other than following the games has a different policy from the fan who has a family but dresses his kids in the team’s attire, plunks them in front of the television for the game, and instills fanhood in them for his team straightaway. The former really has a mere-intention or a provisional plan because he drops his commitment to follow the team, while the latter has a strong commitment to the team.

#### *vi. Commitment and Reliability*

One feature of commitment that Calhoun leaves out is that commitment involves others (and yourself) being able to count on you.

According to Calhoun, mere intending and provisional planning settle the future when something comes up. But often nothing comes up, and that is why a mere-intender or provisional planner sticks with her intention or plan. A committed person, in contrast, stays the course — not always, Calhoun says, because sometimes changing course can be “a wise seizure of the opportunity for trading up” (Calhoun, 2009, p. 627). The trick is to determine what constitutes good reasons for abandoning a commitment such that we can still ascribe commitment rather than mere-intention or provisional plan to the person who abandons.

The distinction between the reasons for sticking with a plan points to a feature of commitment that is central: others can count on a person who is committed (and she can count on herself) in a way that they cannot count on a mere-intender or provisional planner. The latter two share commonalities with moral flits: a flit about marriage is one who stays married only because no one better comes along and thus the flit cannot be counted on to remain faithful. Again, I think Gauthier's notion of the truly moral, or, trustworthy person attempts to capture the idea of reliability: others can count on the truly moral person because even if the world around her goes haywire away from morality, she will stick with her commitment to morality. Gauthier suggests the strong view that there is no good reason to abandon morality.<sup>8</sup> Calhoun's view is a bit weaker because it allows for abandoning a commitment, if only rarely.

Reliability plays the same role in fanhood as in morality. A team needs to be able to count on its fan base for the good spirit and support (not just revenue) it brings to the team and city. If you are prepared to chuck your fanhood when it no longer achieves one of your ends, or you remain a fan only because no better team comes along or you have nothing else to do, then your support is fickle. The team would rightly question your loyalty, which is expressed in a commitment.

I conclude from Section I that fanhood is a commitment that is relevantly similar to a moral disposition. I turn next to a problem about rationality and dispositions or commitments.

## II. A Problem: Rationality

### A. Gauthier, the Dependency Thesis, and the Sceptic

A full defeat of scepticism about acting morally will demonstrate that every morally required act is rationally required. Because of my focus on dispositions, I am interested in attempts to defeat the sceptic in the Hobbesian tradition, where a link is made between the rationality of a moral disposition and the acts expressing it. I want to show that fanhood poses a particular problem for Gauthier's Dependency Thesis in this tradition.

I will offer an interpretation of Thomas Hobbes's work that makes it relevant to the issues Gauthier discusses. Hobbes famously tries to show that every time one acts morally, one acts rationally because one acts in one's own self-interest — rational action is self-interested action (Hobbes, 1962, p. 105). Hobbes believes that each person in the hypothetical State of Nature is rational to make and to keep a contract with others to get out of the State of Nature, a state without morality in which each person's self-preservation is under constant threat from other self-interested and equally powerful persons. Were a person not to follow the contract he agreed to on the condition that others agreed as well, either others will detect his disposition prior to his acting and not receive him into society, that is, contract with him, or they will detect his disposition after he acts and remove him from society, that is, not act morally toward him. Either way, he risks his self-preservation, which is never rational to do (Hobbes, 1962, pp. 113–115).

<sup>8</sup> He suggests this with his idea of the liberal individual in *Morals by Agreement*, as explained in footnote 4.

Gauthier understands Hobbes to be moving toward a dispositional attempt to defeat the sceptic: the reneger, or Foole, disposes himself to morality but fails to act on his disposition and believes it to be rational to do so when doing so is in his immediate self-interest. Hobbes aims to show that acting against one's disposition to be moral is irrational — if it is rational to make a contract and to dispose oneself to morality, it is rational to keep the contract by acting on the disposition (Hobbes, 1962, p. 115). We could read Hobbes to be saying that the self-interested reason for acting morally in keeping one's contract, which is to promote one's self-preservation and to obtain the material goods of cooperation, is the same self-interested reason for making the contract and disposing oneself to be a contract keeper in the first place. A contract breaker thinks only of his immediate self-interest, but were he to consider his overall self-interest, he would see that rationality dictates that he not risk his self-preservation and opportunity to achieve the goods of cooperation for the sake of immediate gain, but instead to act on his cooperative disposition.

Gauthier takes up what he sees to be Hobbes's dispositional move to defeat the sceptic, and explicitly tries to show that the rationality of a moral disposition is connected to the rationality of the acts expressing it. He rejects Hobbes's view that every morally required act is rationally required for two reasons: it is simply false that every morally required act is in one's self-interest, and were it true, we could replace all talk about moral reasons for action with (enlightened) self-interested reasons, making morality in itself useless (Gauthier, 1986, p. 1). The only option Gauthier can take, in order to appeal to a sceptic who accepts only self-interested reasons, is to link the rationality of the disposition, which is grounded in self-interest, to the acts expressing it. His proposal is the Dependency Thesis, i.e., that the rationality of morally required acts depends on or is entailed by the rationality of the disposition they express.<sup>9</sup> I argue elsewhere that Gauthier's argument for this thesis is unsuccessful, but I will not go into these details here.<sup>10</sup> The point to take away is that the rationality of a moral disposition, which Gauthier grounds in self-interest, carries over to the acts expressing it *even in cases where these acts are not in the agent's immediate self-interest*. Although Gauthier does not adequately explain how the Dependency Thesis works, I think it is supposed to capture the idea that the reasoning that makes the disposition rational to have is the same as, or at least similar to, the reasoning for doing the act. He hints that one's reason for adopting constrained maximization *includes* the fact that one must act on it.<sup>11</sup> Thus, whenever a morally disposed person acts morally, she acts rationally because her disposition is rational

<sup>9</sup> As mentioned, Gauthier's argument for the rationality of adopting a moral disposition involves there being enough others similarly disposed, people being translucent, and an expectation of benefit that each can have only in a world with morality. Elsewhere I discuss several interpretations of the Dependency Thesis, including that if one accepts a disposition as rational, rejecting the actions it requires would be inconsistent, and that if one is rational and knows that it would be irrational for one to act in the way one's disposition dictates, it would be impossible for one to dispose oneself in that way (Superson, 2009, pp. 26–34).

<sup>10</sup> See Superson (2009, Chapter Two).

<sup>11</sup> Of course, Gauthier needs to explain this, since a rational commitment cannot just make the acts it entails rational even when they are included in the disposition. Suppose you want to be an Olympic gold medalist in gymnastics and need to practice a lot to achieve your goal. It is rational, given your desire, to dispose yourself to practice a lot and it is necessary that you do so to win the gold medal. If you have

— the acts get their rationality from the disposition they express, and the Dependency Thesis does the work of establishing the rationality of the acts. Granted, constrained maximizers can expect to do better than straightforward maximizers, and the former do not think in terms of immediate self-interest in a single situation, but Gauthier insists that acting morally on the occasion is rational and he needs to explain, using the Dependency Thesis, why it is so. Let us for now assume that the Dependency Thesis is correct in order to see how it plays out for fanhood. If I am right that fanhood is relevantly similar to a moral disposition, the Dependency Thesis should hold for the latter as well.

### **B. Fanhood and Irrational Acts**

What is the connection between a disposition and the acts that express it? On one interpretation, the moral disposition of constrained maximization is or at least behaves like a hardwired psychological trait or strong habit that causes the agent to act on it, independent of her current preferences (Superson, 2009, pp. 183–184). Gauthier notes that a constrained maximizer “is not able, given her disposition, to take advantage of the ‘exceptions’” (Gauthier, 1986, p. 182). The agent cannot help but act from the disposition. But this interpretation does not allow for weakness of will or deliberation, and Gauthier rightly suggests that the moral agent reasons about her actions instead of allowing her disposition to control her (Superson, 2009, p. 185). Thus, we need not consider a disposition so rigidly that it must issue in the relevant acts in every instance, but perhaps we should instead view it as a strong tendency to act, since, in order truly to be a disposition, it must issue in the relevant acts on a sufficient number of occasions, though not always. One needs to act like a Catholic frequently enough to be a Catholic. A good driver uses caution at busy intersections and near hospitals, is on guard for weavers on the highway, and signals appropriately, but might speed down an empty road or turn left at a long red light in the dead of night and nonetheless retain status as a good driver. A moral person’s disposition will issue in moral actions much of the time, though she might occasionally backslide and still be a moral person. A fan will also act in ways displaying her fanhood most of the time. This is just how dispositions work — they cause the agent to act in the relevant ways most of the time but not necessarily in every instance. Dispositions and acts are different but closely related.

The problem is that fanhood can issue in and be expressed by not only ‘good fan’ behaviour, but luck charms, which are superstitious practices in which a fan engages because she believes they will help her team win. I have postulated that fanhood is partly an attitudinal commitment, one grounded in love or intense caring. Having luck charms is a characteristic way that fanhood is expressed in a true fan. The concept of fanhood has built into it that a fan *wants* the team to win. That is, a fan *necessarily* wants the team to succeed in the sense that we cannot imagine a fan who lacks this desire.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the team’s winning is a fan’s strongest fanhood desire. Were the team not to win, the fan would suffer an unfulfilled desire.

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practiced almost every day of the year, and expect to in the future, it is not obviously rational to practice today when you are tired.

<sup>12</sup> A fan might want her team to lose a game so that it gets a better draft pick. But this is only because the fan wants the team to win overall.

A fan will do much to try to satisfy her strongest fanhood desire. But, for the ordinary, non-team member fan, the team's winning is entirely out of her control. No one, however, wants their strongest desires to go unfulfilled; consider the suffering from unrequited love. The formation of luck charms gives the fan the illusion of control over the team's winning and the relevant desire being fulfilled.<sup>13</sup> Because of a fan's deep love for her team and her lack of control over its success, the formation of luck charms is a characteristic expression of fanhood.

I argued in Section I that luck plays a significant role in morality too: whether one encounters many moral dilemmas or is called upon by morality to make many sacrifices to one's self-interest is largely out of one's control. Yet we do not form luck charms about morality. Partly this has to do with our attitudes toward morality versus sports. We tend to think of morality as 'above us' and deserving of our respect, so we 'accept' moral situations as they arise rather than try to control whether they arise. More to the point, one might say that a desire to act morally — or for people to do well or for the world to be a better place — is necessarily part of a moral commitment.<sup>14</sup> Wouldn't some such desire, like a fan's desire for the team to win, drive the formation of luck charms about morality? If so, then not just fanhood would issue in the kind of irrational behaviour that I will argue it does. I think the answer is that a moral desire would not. The difference is that the fan's formation of luck charms in response to her desire for the team to win has no bearing whatsoever on the team's winning or not. The team's success is entirely out of the fan's control but is a function of what the players do and other elements in the game, such as whether the calls are made fairly.<sup>15</sup> But a morally committed person who has a desire to be a moral person or for people to do well or for the world to be a better place has at least some, if not a lot, of control over whether her desire is fulfilled. If one wants to be a moral person as part of one's commitment to morality, one will try to act in ways that make one a moral person and avoid ones that do not, and there is no need to form a luck charm. For the fan, though, her desire for the team to win, grounded in her love for the team, in conjunction with her lack of control over the team's success, drives the formation of luck charms, making them a characteristic way that fanhood gets expressed.<sup>16</sup> This highlights the significance of fanhood and why it is my focus and ultimately the special threat that luck charms pose to the Dependency Thesis, which I will argue has important implications for defeating scepticism about acting morally.

Let us first consider some examples of luck charms. The top five luck charms of sports fans are: staying in the same spot to watch a game, wearing a lucky outfit,

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<sup>13</sup> More than one-fourth of Denver Broncos fans, for example, believe that their superstitions, such as watching the game in the same location and eating the same food every game day, actually affect what happens in the game. See Yandoli (2014).

<sup>14</sup> I owe this point to an anonymous reviewer.

<sup>15</sup> Maybe cheering at a game helps the team win, but luck charms do not because they are based on superstition.

<sup>16</sup> One explanation for the pervasiveness of luck charms lies with evolution, according to which humans gather and process information in order to find regular patterns that help them predict the future outcome of events. People cannot help trying to influence the outcome of games because this reduces anxiety and causes them to focus on the game. See Ohtsuka (2016).



eating the same meal, playing certain music before a game, and having a token, such as an autographed picture, with you when the game begins (King, 2012). In general, keeping everything the same is believed to bring good luck to a team (Chase, 2016). One fan reports having to watch the last two minutes of their team's games standing on top of their coffee table, while another refrains from using the bathroom during their team's games, and yet another has to keep their cell phone in their left pocket when the team is on offence and in their right pocket when it is on defence (The VerMints Team, 2017). If some of these examples seem idiosyncratic, ask yourself whether you have ever found yourself moving to the edge of your seat during a crucial play, and when the play succeeded, you repeated your behaviour for subsequent crucial plays.

Sports players themselves are notorious for adopting luck charms. Walter Payton of the Chicago Bears football team wore the same pants every game during his career. When they split during a game, a ball boy had to come out with a towel so he could wrap himself and come to the sideline, and the team seamstress patched them up every week until they were mere threads held together with patches (Sakamoto, 1989). Turk Wendell of the Chicago Cubs baseball team ate four new pieces of licorice before heading to the mound during each inning he pitched and brushed his teeth between innings. He wore #99 with three teams he played for and signed his contract in 2000 for \$9,999,999.99 (Sakamoto, 1989). Michael Jordan of the Chicago Bulls basketball team wore the same shorts from his college days under his Bulls shorts in every NBA game in which he played (Schimke, 2012).<sup>17</sup>

Luck charms such as these threaten the Dependency Thesis if they are failures of rationality. According to the Dependency Thesis, the rationality of acts depends on or is entailed by the rationality of the disposition they express. What makes fanhood a disposition that is rational to adopt? Its rationality, I believe, comes from its cooperative benefits, making it analogous to a Gauthier-type moral disposition: it brings together people of all stripes, gives us a sense of community by rooting for a common cause and against a common enemy that is neither political, religious, nor moral and so not controversial, aids in socialization, relieves stress, and helps achieve family bonding.<sup>18</sup> Arguably, these benefits differentiate fanhood from other self-interested-based dispositions, such as playing guitar in a band. So, we might think that fanhood is like Gauthier's moral disposition in that adopting either disposition is the only way to reap self-interested benefits. But I do not think that establishing this point matters for my (or Gauthier's) argument. What matters is that, for any disposition, if it is rational (but not necessarily rationally required) to adopt, the Dependency Thesis has it that acting on it is rational. The Dependency Thesis, if it applies to fanhood in the way that Gauthier thinks it applies to a moral commitment, would show that if one is rational to become a deeply committed fan, then one is rational to do those things that express one's fanhood.

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<sup>17</sup> Sports players might adopt luck charms to influence the outcome of their own performance and/or the team's winning.

<sup>18</sup> Of course, a young person who is first becoming a fan might take up fanhood because it seems fun, but in becoming a full-fledged fan, these self-interested reasons justify the disposition.

One kind of counterexample to the Dependency Thesis that parallels the standard objection to the moral disposition of constrained maximization that is justified on cooperatively self-interested grounds would show that there are expressions of fanhood that do not promote the cooperative benefits of the disposition but are in a person's immediate self-interest, such as when a fan prefers to be doing other things rather than watching the game, or needs to skip a season of watching the games due to family illness. How can a Dependency Theorist explain the rationality of adhering to the disposition even when against immediate interest?

I will offer just a few quick attempts, though my main concern is to put forward the case of fanhood and luck charms as a fatal objection to the Dependency Thesis. A Dependency Theorist might seek a way out of these cases by weakening the disposition of fanhood so that it does not require that you do these things. After all, it seems that you can still have camaraderie, family bonding, stress relief, and so on by having a weaker kind of fanhood. Moreover, the Dependency Theorist might weaken the disposition of fanhood so that it does not issue in luck charms or does not issue in luck charms that cause one to act against the cooperative benefits of fanhood, such as when one is too lazy to get up to get one's team gear and so fail to show solidarity.

But I think it would be difficult to predict exceptions to the strong disposition of fanhood that would maintain true fanhood — how many times can one skip watching the games because one would rather do something else and still reap the benefits of fanhood? — and it would be psychologically difficult to dispose oneself to a weaker version of fanhood because of fanhood's grip on a fan's psyche and desires. I think this holds for many dispositions — they are tendencies to act and they cause us to act in certain ways, some of which we cannot predict or exclude at the outset. Consider Derek Parfit's (1984) case of Kate, a writer whose strongest desire is to make her books as good as possible. Were this not Kate's strongest desire, she would find her work boring and her books would suffer. It is rational for her to dispose herself to make her books as good as possible, but sometimes this causes her to work so hard that she becomes exhausted and depressed, which is irrational. Kate's strongest disposition is rational for her to adopt, given her desires. Regarding fanhood, the stronger disposition representing deeply committed fanhood is clearly rational because of the expected benefits it can bring a fan. Aside from this, weakening the disposition would still not establish that the behaviours in question are rational, which is the point of the Dependency Thesis. In addition, it would be an inadequate reply, were a Dependency Theorist to make it, that no counterexample to the Dependency Thesis succeeds because either we can tweak the disposition so that it never issues in irrational action or hold that a disposition is rational if and only if it issues in only rational actions.<sup>19</sup> This would beg the question in favour of the Dependency Thesis.

<sup>19</sup> As I understand it, it is not Gauthier's intent to tweak a disposition so that it covers possible counterexamples showing that some act expressing it is irrational. Rather, he aims to show that a disposition such as constrained maximization is rational because in one's self-interest, and then to establish that the acts emanating from this disposition are rational in virtue of the Dependency Thesis — the acts 'get' their rationality from the disposition they express. But, as I said, his explanation for how this happens is opaque.

A Dependency Theorist might seize on the point that the rationality of the disposition *includes* acting on it. One way to explain this is to say that even if committing to being moral, for instance, requires you to forgo a self-benefiting action, it is rational to forgo it because it is rational to commit to taking the chance of having to forgo it.<sup>20</sup> But the Dependency Theorist would still need to establish in what sense or why it is rational to act as the commitment dictates. The Dependency Theorist cannot simply state that because an act stems from a commitment, it is rational in virtue of doing so. I think the case of fanhood brings out my objection best, as I will now explain. I suggest that luck charms pose a different problem from preference-satisfaction deviation for the Dependency Thesis.

For consider that luck charms are irrational not because they fail to promote the cooperative benefits of fanhood, but because they are grounded in false beliefs instead of fact. They are pure superstition and have no effect on the outcome of a game, notwithstanding the fact that some of the examples I cited are ones of very successful players. Interestingly, there is some evidence that luck charms work for athletes because they boost a person's confidence in her ability to succeed, which in turn boosts expectations and persistence, thereby improving performance (Schuster, 2010). However, this evidence is inconclusive, and no reasonable coach would advise an athlete to acquire them for performance enhancement. Luck charms, certainly for non-team member fans, have as much to do with winning as cursing a cow has to do with its death.<sup>21</sup> Their grounding in false beliefs precludes their lining up with *any* sound reasoning or justification for the disposition of fanhood: superstitions are irrational flat out.

This makes my objection of luck charms different from preference-satisfaction deviation objections to the Dependency Thesis, such as Gregory Kavka's (1983) toxin puzzle. Kavka argues that it is rational to form a commitment to drink a toxin at midnight that will make you very sick for a day if you will get \$1 million to do so. But when midnight arrives, drinking the toxin is not rational, even if you cannot help but drink it due to your commitment, because it will make you very sick and you already have the money. It is open to the Dependency Theorist to attempt to explain how drinking the toxin really is in your interest, and I have briefly discussed some attempts. But luck charms issued in by fanhood are *inherently* irrational, and as such, they decisively threaten the Dependency Thesis.

An objector to my view that luck charms threaten the Dependency Thesis in this special way might attempt to defuse the threat by again seizing on the point that the rationality of a disposition includes acting on it, this time arguing that the rationality of fanhood includes the fact that the fan must act on her disposition *even if it means acting on luck charms*. This is not because fanhood with luck charms is an all-things-considered best available kind of fanhood, but because luck charms can give a fan more of the things that are beneficial about fanhood. Luck charms can show commitment and common purpose, express shared attitudes, and so on —

<sup>20</sup> I owe this point to an anonymous reviewer.

<sup>21</sup> Allegedly, Martha Carrier's cursing a cow that later died was sufficient for charging her with being a witch in 1692. See Kent (2008).

all of which can contribute to the rationality of adopting fanhood.<sup>22</sup> By building luck charms into the disposition, the objector can use the Dependency Thesis to try to establish the rationality even of luck charms — both fanhood and luck charms are rational because they bring about the same benefits.

But I think this way of defusing my objection about the irrationality of luck charms does not refute the threat they pose to the Dependency Thesis. For one thing, luck charms might very well contribute to bringing about the benefits of fanhood, but they are not essential for achieving these benefits. A fan who does not have luck charms can have a rational fanhood.

But a more damaging problem that luck charms pose stems from their inherent irrationality. For even if we agree that having luck charms is part of what gives a fan the benefits of fanhood, their inherent irrationality still stands and cancels out the rationality they might have as part of the benefit of fanhood. Since luck charms are inherently irrational due to their basis in false beliefs, they will always pose a challenge to the Dependency Thesis: the reason for adopting the disposition will not carry over to the acts that express it.<sup>23</sup>

### C. Upshot for Defeating Scepticism

What does the disparity between the rationality of fanhood and some of the acts that express it (luck charms) tell us?

We can give two responses. The first, dire, response is that the disparity says something about *morality*. The obvious reason is that *any* counterexample to the Dependency Thesis proves its falsity. If it is false, then the lesson from fanhood is that, despite the promise of Gauthier's project, we should abandon this attempt to defeat the sceptic about acting morally.

The second, benign, response is that the disparity says something only about fanhood. I have suggested that fanhood is partly an attitudinal commitment, grounded in intense love for or care about a team. Because of the deep love for a team that underlies this commitment (whose object is out of the fan's control), fanhood is unique in issuing in inherently irrational acts. Were the fan not to have deep love for her team, but a mere-intention or a weaker disposition than a commitment, she would not develop luck charms. Then she would not be a true fan, but merely a fair-weather fan. When it comes to fanhood, rationality demands being a true fan rather than a fair-weather one so that one reaps the benefits of true fanhood. True fanhood is ordinarily understood to have intense love for or care about a team built into it. The benign response to the luck charm counterexample to the Dependency Thesis is that the attitudinal commitment built into fanhood makes fanhood unique in issuing in irrational acts, and so much the worse for it. We can draw no similar conclusions

<sup>22</sup> I owe this objection to an anonymous reviewer.

<sup>23</sup> Technically, only one instance of a luck charm would demonstrate the failure of the Dependency Thesis. For this reason, we do not need to demonstrate that luck charms are a necessary expression of fanhood. I have said that having luck charms is a characteristic way that fanhood is expressed, which makes it much more difficult to explain away a single instance as an anomaly. The threat they pose to the Dependency Thesis cannot be minimized.

about other commitments, and there is no threat to the defeat of moral scepticism via the Dependency Thesis.

But the benign response gets it wrong. Arguably, other commitments, including, for our purposes, moral ones, are driven by a force comparable to the attitude underlying fanhood that issues in irrational action. Following Calhoun, I have suggested that morality is a normative commitment, which is a commitment to a particular value or practical principle. This value or principle, rather than an attitude, grounds a moral commitment. But it too can drive a person to act irrationally. Consider a person who has a moral commitment to be nice to others, which is obviously different from the kind of moral commitment Gauthier envisions. Her commitment is driven by her genuine value of niceness. Because she is so nice, she has many friends, people like to be around her and are always happy to see her, and they often return her niceness in kind. But sometimes people, including her loved ones, step on her or take advantage of her. They might be degrading or rude to her because they know she will not take them on. She is quick to excuse their meanness and feels sorry for them because she focuses on the good in others and believes they cannot help themselves for being who they are and acting as they do. But taking abusive treatment from others is irrational. Yet her commitment to being nice, grounded in her sincere value of niceness, drives her to act in these ways. Were she to have a mere-intention or weaker disposition, she would walk away from others or reconsider her intention when they took advantage of her niceness. But a commitment to niceness involves taking the high road in such circumstances, engaging persistently, and surmounting these challenges. She sees the other person as the one who has the problem and sticks to her commitment rather than reconsidering it. Having a weaker disposition would not bring her the benefits she gets from being truly committed to niceness and so is irrational. Thus, in the case of both fanhood and some versions of morality, the commitment, which is rational to adopt and is undergirded by either an attitude or a value or principle, drives the person to act in irrational ways. The point seems to favour the dire response. Is there a way out?

#### **D. A Possible Solution**

In order to defuse the threat that luck charms pose to the Dependency Thesis, we might write off fans who have them — fanatics — as being *obsessed* rather than as having a disposition of fanhood. Indeed, the word ‘fan’ comes from *fanaticus*, which means to be “insanely but divinely inspired” (van Schaik, 2012). True fanhood, we may believe, as opposed to fanaticism, does not issue in irrational behaviour.

This attempt to dismiss fanhood that results in luck charms, however, is likely to backfire since it commits us to dismiss any of our dispositions reflecting our hobbies or projects that we take seriously. Consider runners who feel they are missing out without a daily run, and those whose job dedication leads them to work incessantly, even on vacation. Such commitments are arguably obsessions, so it would be wrong to single out fanhood on this ground. Are all of our seriously held dispositions obsessions?

Just what is an obsession anyway? We use the term loosely, to indicate that a person goes overboard in her actions, as when we say ‘Lisa is obsessed with seeing new

movies' or 'Pippa is obsessed with working out' or 'Bob is obsessed with having a clean house.' A person can be labelled as obsessive when she acts in the relevant way too often, or in an extreme way, or to the exclusion of doing other things. The obsessed person goes in the wrong direction, losing sight of the right goal. If Pippa squeezes in some triceps presses whenever she passes a bench, she is more concerned with getting in every workout possible than with the benefits of working out. Lisa's concern with seeing every new movie causes her to lose sight of the purpose of seeing a movie, which is the enjoyment it brings, because she ends up seeing a lot of bad ones instead of waiting to hear the reviews. Bob finds himself in a cleaning cycle, moving from spot to spot and starting over again rather than resting and realizing that dust will always fall and a yearly thorough cleaning with occasional maintenance is sufficient for achieving his goal of having a clean house.

I think that having luck charms about one's team is *not* an obsession. Luck charms are a sign of deep care about your team. This is not a bad or misdirected object. Indeed, your deep love for your team is what makes you a reliable fan that others can count on just as caring about morality itself and having a moral character rather than thinking about your duty each time you act makes you a reliable and truly moral person.<sup>24</sup> True fanhood just *is* your life, in a big way. You incorporate it into your very being, and it defines and identifies you the way morality does. We want this disposition to issue in all kinds of acts, including self-sacrificial ones and luck charms because otherwise a fan does not seem to have the right attitude — she seems not to care enough, like a flit who follows a disposition half-heartedly, only when convenient.

I conclude that fanhood, due to luck charms, fatally threatens the link between the rationality of a moral disposition and the acts expressing it. Thus, it provides a decisive reason for us to jettison the Dependency Thesis as a way to defeat scepticism about acting morally. This should be worrisome for philosophers who do not want to limit their options in resolving this intractable issue, and especially for Gauthier, for whom the Dependency Thesis is his only option for defeating scepticism, given his goal of defending the rationality of acting morally for reasons other than immediate self-interest.

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<sup>24</sup> Baron (1984) reconceptualizes the Kantian moral motive as mostly a secondary motive, which is like a screening device that a moral person uses to rule out actions that conflict with duty, in contrast to a primary motive, which requires that a person act for the sake of duty in each action. The latter might be an obsession.

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