Make Bread out of Stones: A Psychoanalysis on the Process of Temptation

Joëlle Chamieh[1]

If you can look into the seeds of Time and Say which grain will grow and which will not, speak then to me… (William Shakespeare – Macbeth Act 1, Scene 3)

ABSTRACT

The process of temptation has been extensively examined, from a philosophical and theological point of view, and this has led to the understanding of the internal development of temptation through the functions of the will and its actions. Despite of all these extensive studies, the psychological aspects and drivers behind the process of temptation remained, somehow, neglected given that few studies have approached the subject, but still, without any solid psychological theoretical support. In this study, we propose to fill the above-mentioned gap by providing a comprehensive psychological framework based on the self-determination theory (SDT). Nonetheless, after having adapted the theoretical concepts of SDT to the context of religiously oriented temptations, we applied the above-mentioned framework to the three temptations of Jesus in the wilderness. As a result, we found that not only does the defined framework provide us with a solid support for the psychological understanding of the three temptations, but also, we were able to decipher an original message embodied within the second temptation (as per Mathew's order) where believers are invited to defend their free will and autonomy.

[1] Department of Information and Communication, Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium,

1.0   Introduction

For over the last two thousand years, leading thinkers have thoroughly debated the process of temptation from a theological and philosophical point of view. This has led to well-established concepts that explained how the will and its actions, whether strong or weak, are main elements within the human soul, which are in continuous interaction with temptation. In this context, we found evidence of the existence of a "free will" through the interpretation of the concept of quantum consciousness, which is derived from the quantum theory (Kaku, 2005). On the basis of the existence of a "free will", Aquinas provides us with a comprehensive understanding of human motives as he undermines the strength of will in terms of "ignorance", "passion or weakness" and "wickedness" (Kent, 2007: 72). On the other hand, Descartes defines the will not only as the power to pursue or shun but also as the power to affirm or deny (Hoffman, 1995:243); he interprets the actions of will as volitions that have a source in our soul (Hoffman, 1995:241). As such, we can sense from the above that the psychological dimensions play a critical role in temptation, where the success of its deployment relies mainly on exploiting the psychological vulnerabilities of the tempted, thus, leading him/her to what is morally wrong (Day, 1993: 175,177,178). Nevertheless, we find that the psychological aspects of the religiously oriented temptations have been neglected and few studies have addressed the subject – i.e. Fr. Keefe's presentation (Keefe, 2002) – but still, not with an extensive approach based on a solid psychological theoretical support.

In this study, we propose to fill the above mentioned gap by providing a comprehensive framework that will not only permit us to uncover the psychological dimensions of temptation but also to shed light from a new angle which will help us understand the intrinsic meanings of Jesus's three temptations in the desert. In order to reach this objective, we applied the self-determination theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (Deci and Ryan, 2000), as a psychological analysis grid for the apprehension of weaknesses and vulnerabilities, in terms of imbalances of well-being, so as to decipher the temptation strategies deployed to exploit these imbalances. On the basis of SDT, we further developed this psychological theory of temptation by applying it to the three temptations of Jesus in the desert.

In conclusion, we found that SDT served as a suitable and well-adapted theory that was able to provide us with a deep psychological understanding of human weaknesses on the temptation process. More so, by applying this theory to the three temptations of Jesus, we extracted new and original messages embodied within the story telling of these temptations.

2.0   Free will and quantum consciousness

Before we ponder into the analysis of a strong or weak will it is imperative to understand, at first, whether we do have a free will because without freedom of will there can be no personal choice or personal struggle for the realization of self-control, determination and continence. It is through the reasoning of theories in physics and cosmology that we have chosen to debate this very part that is related with freedom of will before entering into theological and philosophical controversies that rationalize the strength and weakness of will – which, of course, are based on the belief of freedom of will and uncertainty not determinism.

The most ancient question that we still ask and which has been a major debate for many decades now, and where philosophers, theologians, scientists and even writers and poets have stood perplexed rationalizing is the following: "… who decides our fate (Kaku, 2005:153)?" Newton and Einstein based their answer to this question by applying their reasoning on determinism whilst indicating that the future is determined through the precise reading of past events. According to Newton, the whole universe is based on the exact ticking of an enormous clock bound up to God since the beginning of time (Kaku, 2005:154). The French mathematician Pierre Simon de Laplace (who was Napoleon's scientific advisor) also believed in Newton's law as he considered that through the precise reading of the past one could determine the future. Newton and Einstein believed that our lives have already been inscribed in the

book of God billions of years ago, they eventually considered that the fate of every living being or thing is already determined, as Einstein says: "… human will is not free … Everything is determined … by the force which we have no control… for the insect as well as well as for the star (Kaku, 2005: 155)."

However, the advent of quantum physics in the 20th century that has experimentally succeeded in proving its laws of physics for the subatomic world shook the foundation of Einstein and Newton's belief in determinism. Effectively, the second postulate quantum physics states that the position of an object can never be known but only through its wave function, that provides only the probability and not the exact position of the object. This second postulate in conjunction with Heisenberg's uncertainty principle demolished the foundation of physical determinism and laid the path for the restoration of the free will concept through uncertainty. Moreover, the third postulate of quantum physics stipulates that an object exists in all its states and only after its measurement by an objective external observer that its wave function collapses towards the observed states which implies need for consciousness mandatory for the existence of free will (Kaku, 2005: 153).

3.0   A strong will or a weak will

Temptation is a procedure that is built on prolonged doses of malice administered to destabilize the will of a person. However, what do we mean by the will or more precisely a strong will or a weak will? First of all, we must understand that a strong will is more effective than a weak will. A person with a weak will cannot easily perform what he intends to do (Hoffman, 1995:241). In terms of decision theory, a person with a strong will may intend to do something by giving preference to it but would rather give more preference to not doing it in terms of his/her higher-orders of desires and beliefs, thus pertaining to what Socrates said, "Know thyself (Bigelow et al., 1990: 340)." Descartes analyses actions of will as volitions that have a source in our soul. He differentiates between the ones that end in the soul and the ones that end in the body which are considered as human actions that fall under two types, pursuit and avoidance (Hoffman, 1995:241, 242). The strength of will is apparent in the actions that terminate in the body since they seem to be in struggle with other internal bodily actions. Strength of will is apparent when a person is able to control these struggles and win them (Hoffman, 1995:242). Through a more concrete analysis, we realize that weakness of the will does not only rely on winning an internal bodily struggle which takes form into external bodily actions – be it conceived from the soul as Plato and Aristotle consider or conceived from the brain as Descartes considers (Hoffman, 1995:242) - it is a whole procedure that is too complicated to be grasped since it depends also on the knowledge and correct identification of weak morals and what one ought to do or not do (Mathews, 1966: 405-407). Concerning weakness of will, "Much use is made, in discussion of this topic, of the terms 'moral principles' or 'moral judgments', and 'desires' or 'inclinations' (Mathews, 1966: 406)." However, weakness of will cannot correspond to the precise measurements of the above mentioned terms, it all depends on the person concerned and his actions, whether he is in knowledge of what he is doing as wrong or whether he is not in knowledge or even if he is in knowledge but cannot resist his passionate desire in doing the wrong (Mathews, 1966: 413). Aquinas gives indication to the basis of these human motives – that are derived from weakness of will – which he positions as internal origins of sin and he divides them as such: "ignorance, passion or weakness and wickedness (Kent, 2007: 72)." He also considers that the magnitude of sin relies on these three origins where ignorance has less gravity than passion or weakness and where wickedness is considered as the most serious of all (Kent, 2007: 72). We will speak more profoundly about the gravities of sin, but for the moment let us proceed with our emphasis on weakness of will.

Weakness of will cannot be generalized on the basis of a traditional form of understanding of what is wrong, although Aristotle does represent it as such by considering that "…both the case where a man cheerfully accepts bad principles and acts in accordance with them without compunction, and the case where he follows his desires against his moral principles and feels contrition and remorse (Mathews, 1966: 406)." This is much of a simplified identification that applies to some cases but not to all (Mathews, 1966: 406, 412) as we explained previously by applying Aquinas's rationale. Additionally, when Aristotle implies that weakness of will begins with non-regret and ends with repentance he cannot mean that the

person who is committing this sin (since sin is mainly a part of the will as Saint Augustine says) is inclined to habitually sinning, such a person is not driven by passion but rather by specific maliciousness and does not feel the need to repent but rather feels a certain cheer, as Aquinas considers (Kent, 2007: 76,77). Additionally, a person who ends up regretting his actions cannot enter the act without compunction if he is not subdued by passion (Kent, 2007: 76, 77, and 91).

Furthermore, weakness of will depends on moral judgments that may be rationalized through the term "ought," what one ought to do in accordance to his/her moral judgments or against them and here plays the role of a person's cognition of what is described or what is prescribed. That is, why the action against ones moral judgment cannot be restricted only to his/her "knowledge" that is linked to his/her perception of "ought" since both terms become "off-color" if their inter-linkage does not show a clear pattern where distortion and blurring are enhanced due to physical or psychological disabilities (Mathews, 1966: 414). Descartes gives a clearer explanation to this situation that conveys ambiguity in the function of reasoning, which is identified by the term "off-color." He considers that a person's sensory ideas, that comprise external sensations (i.e. touch, smell, color, sound…), lead to obscure and confusing judgments that are identical to the sensations of passion that have a confusing effect on our perceptions in terms of our analysis of what is good and what is bad (Hoffman, 1995:244).

3.01   Inclination towards reason or passion

The battle of reason and passion is arbitrated by the actions of the will, for, it is the will that decides which is to win and which is to lose (Kent, 2007: 70). This is what delineates whether the will is weak or strong as "Descartes defines the will not only as the power to pursue or shun but also as the power to affirm or deny (Hoffman, 1995:243)." Aquinas also refers to the battle between reason and passion, where, when incontinence triumphs, the power of passion takes the lead (Kent, 2007: 70). However, the concept is not as easy as it appears to be; there are internal triggers (ignorance, passion or weakness and wickedness) and external triggers (physical) that compensate for the intentions initiated by the actions of the will

Aquinas names these internal triggers as sins of internal origins and he divides them as such: ignorance, passion or weakness and wickedness. Ignorance and passion are not as aggravated in terms of sin as much as wickedness. Sins committed out of ignorance are the least that a person could be held responsible for, whereas, sins committed out of passion (that come between ignorance and wickedness in terms of gravity) will leave the person with remorse followed subsequently by repentance. Sins committed out of wickedness (which are the most serious of sins) are derived from dispassion, where a person does not feel any regret since he is inclined to continual sinning and feels self-contented (Kent, 2007:73,74,76,91). However, Aquinas refuses to acknowledge any pretext held by weakness or incontinence to be considered as absolvent to sin, for, when a person lacks self-control he cannot be considered as weak or incontinent (you cannot control something you lack) (Kent, 2007:71,72,80,81,86,90).

> …Aquinas would protest that we often claim that we cannot resist temptation when all we mean is that we find it exceedingly hard to resist… In the rare cases where people actually are unable to resist temptation, because they are unable of using their reason to control their first–order desires, they are not to be blamed for sins of weakness. They are not to be blamed at all (Kent, 2007: 81).

This means that a person cannot be simply justified of sin by merely claiming difficulty in controlling weakness; he must rather acknowledge that he failed in employing his capacity of self-control (Kent, 2007: 86, 90).

3.02   The act of will as an internal mechanism

The act of weakness is observed in terms of behavior, it is a lack of self-control towards a better judgment, and here the person is held responsible for not applying his capabilities of control, but this

cannot explain the reason why he went against his better judgment. Therefore, it is not through behavior that one must assess the intensity of sin but rather through deeper causalities – i.e. ignorance, weakness, wickedness according to Aquinas (Kent, 2007: 72); or against ones reason or intellect, according to Descartes (Hoffman, 1995:246). In addition, one must not look upon external output in order to discredit or to give credit to the power of will but rather to internal output that is defined by Descartes as an act of choice that is able to pursue or shun and even to affirm or deny (Hoffman, 1995:243). Therefore, the power of will lies on affirming the true and denying the false through the choice of pursuing the good and shunning the bad (Hoffman, 1995:243,244). This, according to Descartes, occurs through ones reason that is an internal essence of human mechanism. The efficiency of reason in subduing desires and passions is also mentioned by Locke who says: "…that a man is able to deny his own desires, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what reason direct as best, although the appetite leans the other way (Laurie et al., 2005: 287,288)[.]" Albritton, however, considers that the power of will takes form through the liberty of indifference where a person is not compelled to act according to what his reason dictates, as he suggests that reason is an external element, and that, if revered, one acts against his free will (Hoffman, 1995:245,246). Such discourse does not conform to what Descartes and Aquinas believe. To them, the power of will to subdue passion comes from within; be it from reason or intellect or from the capacity of self-control (since Aquinas never gives excuses for failure in self-control) (Hoffman, 1995; Kent, 2007). Nonetheless, according to Descartes, passion is the main destructor of will, as he believes that: "… passions are potential impediments to the implementation of our will (Hoffman, 1995:250), contrary to Aquinas who "… never denies that someone might act counter to her better judgment without having her mind in anyway clouded by passion (Kent, 2007:91)." Therefore, Aquinas, unlike Descartes, considers that people may act dispassionately due to a certain vicious disposition even though they might not be vicious by nature, but still, he considers this as a sin of wickedness (Kent, 2007:91). Moreover, some prominent intellectuals such as Nietzsche, Sartre, Freud and Ellenberger showed determination in terms of the subversion of willpower and reason where conscious awareness can be lacking in order to serve the impulses (as quoted by Laurie et al., 2005– Ellenberger, 1970; Freud, 1959; Nietzsche, 1918; Sartre, 1956). While Descartes acknowledges the power of passion – which he considers as being external to us that is why we are not free when we are subdued by passion – in acting on our will, Aquinas does not give in to any argumentation that gives ultimate power to passion which he considers as a tool that can be managed by the unobstructed capacity of self-control (Hoffman, 1995:251; Kent, 2007).

4.0   Temptation in its Biblical and Mundane sense

Temptation has many facets that are quite challenging and difficult to be deciphered while dealing with its various complexities. In this part, we will briefly analyze temptation in both its biblical and mundane sense. In the biblical sense, temptation has a different understanding that is, more or less, metaphorical rather than straightforward as it narrates how Satan in the desert of Judea tempted Jesus at the very beginning of his public ministry (G.S., 1890: 242). After having stayed for forty days and nights without food or drink, Satan came and said to him: "If you are God's son, order these stones to turn into bread (Mathew 4.3)." This very sentence has shown us that Jesus came to save our souls and not our bodies thus placing faith and God's Word before food as an endeavor for our life's motive (G.S., 1890: 242) that is why Jesus's reply was "Man cannot live on bread alone, but needs every word that God speaks (Mathews 4. 4)." Therefore, the first temptation stands for "… the mythological abundance of Paradise returned to earth (McCown, 1919: 406)." That is Jesus refuses to build his Kingdom on materialistic goals symbolized as food for the flesh (McCown, 1919: 406). In the second temptation Satan says to Jesus "If you are God's Son, throw yourself down, for the scripture says, God will give order to his angels about you they will hold you up in their hands so that not even your feet will be hurt on stones (Mathew 4. 6)." In this temptation, Satan asks Jesus to put God into test; his answer was: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test (Mathew 4.7)." This shows Jesus's attitude towards his Father, he does not accept to take matters in his own hands but to carry out what his Father wants. This has shown how Jesus, throughout his life, was working accordingly upon the will of his Father not upon his own will (G.S. 1890: 242). Therefore, in this second temptation the message is to understand that it is God's intervention only that

we must seek for in this world (McCown, 1919: 407). In the third temptation Satan takes Jesus to a high mountain, shows him all the kingdoms, and says to him: "All this I will give you if you kneel down and worship me (Mathew 4.8) Here, the question was, would Jesus rule the world and show his splendor and grandeur under material and earthly powers? Jesus's answer was: "Go away Satan! The scripture says, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him (Mathew 4.10)!" In his response, Jesus rejects all material and earthly powers and gives significance to spiritual supremacy, which is the way to salvation as it defies all human powers and imperialistic ambitions (G.S., 1890: 242; McCown, 1919: 407).

In a worldly sense, succumbing to temptation means yielding to what is morally wrong as it derives from the work of Satan on human souls (Day, 1993: 175,177,178). Shakespeare asks the following: "[Is it] the tempter or the tempted, who sins more (Day, 1993: 179)." This question does appear paranormal in a mundane sense because if the tempter is Satan it is impossible for any human to tempt him, only God can do that. However, God can never be a tempter because temptation is based on what is immoral and God can never act immorally. Nonetheless, if we look at it in worldly sense it is possible for a human to tempt another human. Here, the tempter acts as an agent of Satan to tempt another human (indirect satanic temptation), but still, he is considered as tempted (Day, 1993: 179,180).

In order to understand temptation in a more realistic manner we will make a practical comparison between tempting and offering. Temptation gives the impression of being as innocent as offering – since it relies mostly on offering, "Make bread out of stones" – but it is nothing of the sort. Offers are usually straightforward and unconcealed whilst temptations have to be concealed and disguised because temptations, which appeal mostly to the unconscious mind, rely on immorality and cannot appear as simple as offers. For temptations to be convincing they must arouse strong desires and here, the tempted must use resistance. This is not the case with offers. Temptations are most of the time conditional and have degrees (strongly tempted), whilst offers are unconditional and there is no such thing as strongly or less strongly offered. Temptations inflict pain since they are morally wrong; they enslave a person and limit his/her liberty, while offers do not act on enslavement or on inflicting pain (Day, 1993: 176, 177).

5.0   Self-Determination Theory as a psychological framework for understanding temptation

5.01   Background

According to Fr. Keefe, temptations are the byproducts of human drives that are précised to two psychological aspirations: "mastery" (independence, assertiveness, achievement, accomplishment…) and "merger" (partnership, community, family, friendship…) (Keefe, 2002). On the basis of this assessment, we found that the self-determination theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan, provides a solid theoretical background for the psychological understanding of the interrelatedness between the will and temptation. Effectively, the self-determination theory proposes that human motivation is more understood and absorbed rationally by exploring a person's "innate psychological needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 227)." Hence, in SDT, needs are defined as "innate, organismic necessities rather than acquired (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 229)," and they are specified as "innate psychological nutriments that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity, and well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 229)." More specifically, the need of competence falls into the ability of accomplishing worthwhile challenges and in achieving rewarding experiences that bring about mastery and gratification within a person's social and physical environment. Concerning the need for relatedness, it is defined in terms of acquiring attachments whilst obtaining a feeling of intimacy, security and belongingness. Finally, the need for autonomy is determined through the organization and regulation of a person's behavior where inner consistency and stability are the main regulators for the demands and goals (but most importantly, this coherence will be destabilized once it becomes open to external "heteronomous control") (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 252).

Furthermore, it is important to note that SDT falls under the "eudaimonic" approach of well-being. This approach characterizes the state of well-being as a condition where a person is fully functioning (Deci

and Ryan, 2000: 323). As such, human needs depend on such a high functioning of the self where appropriate psychological health and ultimate satisfaction is attainable. However, if there is failure in the attainment of such needs, deficits will appear in the functioning of well-being where switching to other alternatives will be substituted to cover up those needs (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 229,233).

5.02   Weakness of will from SDT point of view

In trying to understand the basic formula, which displays what the needs aim to acquire in terms of primary satisfaction, we realize that the needs function upon the attainment of their goals through their exhaustion of any potential means (i.e. diverting courses when problems appear). More so, when the satisfaction of such needs collapses, we tend to sense a certain imbalance in the basic need satisfaction structure where weakness of will crawls in to find its psychological roots (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 248). Here is where SDT may provide us with a certain understanding of the dark side of human behavior whilst taking into consideration the following:

> (a) the development and amelioration of ill-being and psychopathology; (b) the acquisition and consequences of need substitutes (i.e. materialism, ego involvements); (c) the antecedents and regulation of negative mood states and stress; and (d) the experience of alienation and impoverished motivation and vitality, with an across domains (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 321).

More precisely, the need for substitutes is the main driver for a weak will and through the provisioning of these substitutes, temptation occurs. Moreover, the consequence of falling into temptation (through the effective provisioning of substitutes) is that substitutes possess an inclination to prolong the feeling of deficiency in the need satisfaction sensation where people are trapped in their focus "on the need substitutes or extrinsic goals, thus strengthening the "wrong" goals and exacerbating the negative, ill-being consequences (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 250)."

6.0   Tempter modus operandi

6.01   Theological approach

Going back to the first biblical temptation, the temptation of Adam and Eve, Eve was tempted by Satan to taste the fruit from the tree of knowledge that gives godly wisdom, and so, accessibility to mastery (gratification). While Adam fell into this same temptation in accepting the fruit from Eve, his bait was through the desire to merger (social fulfillment) (Keefe, 2002). Moreover, in his proposal, Satan was camouflaging what is evil in the guise of what is good. By focusing on the good side, we fall into temptation without noticing the evil (Keefe, 2002). Although there is nothing bad in tasting the fruit from the tree of knowledge but such an act would be defying God and rejecting his Divinity by proclaiming to have His knowledge. Here is where the power of will comes into play, when a person resists temptation through humility (accepting the supremacy of God) and courage (knowing thyself). However, how can a person be deceived and dominated by the power of temptation? Satan uses a psychological trick, he approaches a person under a good and blameless pretext that is able to bring down his defenses, and when resistance becomes feeble, evil domination would become easily accessible. This may lead a person to sink into an endless abyss where enslavement would drag him/her into an infinite vicious circle.

The path to temptation is considered accessible through these four steps, as presented by Fr. Keefe: 1) "resistance", 2) "hesitation", 3) "weakening" and 4) "surrender" (Keefe, 2002). Therefore, one must learn to be vigilant and to try to read the first signs of temptation before entering into enslavement that, sometimes, comes under the innocent pretext of "make bread out of stones."

6.02   Psychological approach

From a psychological point of view the tempter proceeds in proposing needs substitutes (temptation) to the tempted by exploiting his basic needs imbalances through what self-determinism theory defines as the internalization of extrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 235). In terms of SDT, the process of

internalization is a natural function where individuals internalize socially accepted customs or triggers so as to be digested into their own operative system. Nevertheless, in the context of a compelling internalization process, the external values or regulations may or may not be fully integrated and sometimes the only reach they may attain is introjection (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 235, 236).

Consequently, SDT defines four levels of internalization, as presented by Deci and Ryan: "external regulation", "introjection", "identification" and "integration" (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 236).

External regulation relates to the context where people react uniquely to extrinsic motivation without any level of internalization. It is the classic case where people's behavior is guided either by reward or by the fear of punishment. Introjection is the level where extrinsic motivation, although not completely absorbed, becomes an accepted regulation. So in opposition to the external regulations that are imposed by the outside, the introjection phase sustains that regulations are inflicted by individuals upon themselves. Identification represents a further level of internalization where external motivations are accepted and they become part of the operating mode of a person. Nevertheless, these regulations would still be in need of extrinsic triggers. Finally, integration represents the fullest degree of internalization where the extrinsic motivation becomes completely in fusion with the existing components of the self (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 236).

By the inherent nature of temptation, as needs substitute, the internalization of the extrinsic motivation of the tempter can never reach the integration level otherwise they cannot be considered as needs substitutes which lead us to a logical absurdity. The utmost level that a temptation can reach is the identification level, where the extrinsic behavior becomes fully accepted and at the same time the tempted will be under the tempter's control through the need of extrinsic motivation. Effectively, Deci and Ryan have illustrated how the execution of the genocide temptation by the Germans in World War II can be modeled from the SDT perspective through external regulations, introjection and un-integration, as compartmentalized identifications (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 331).

7.0   Methodological approach

Our methodological approach, in this study, resides in the performance of adapting the concepts of SDT to the context of religiously oriented temptations so as to lay the foundations of a psychological analysis on temptation. In order to reach this objective, we rationalized our steps as follows: first we began by demonstrating, through quantum consciousness, the plausible existence of "free will" then we proceeded by analyzing philosophical and theological debates where the role of the will (in terms of its strengths and weaknesses) has shown importance in its strength for the obstruction of the process of temptation. However, we also sensed, through this debate, a significant role for inner weaknesses that has given importance to the psychological aspects of temptation through their vulnerabilities. On the basis of our findings, we proceeded by presenting a brief overview on the self-determination theory (SDT), which we found logical so as to have its concepts adapted to the context of the religiously oriented temptations. Then, finally, we applied our adapted theory to the three temptations of Jesus in order to check its validity and decipher psychological messages and temptation strategies deployed by Satan.

8.0   Jesus's temptations in the desert from the SDT perspective

Through his strong capacity in resisting temptation, Jesus (the tempted) provided us with a modus operandi not only on how to address the psychological risk of temptation but also on how to read more profoundly the psychological strategy deployed by Satan (the tempter), who's aim is to internalize the extrinsic motivation (the temptation) into the tempted with the purpose of reaching the identification level and by consequence enslave the tempted.

In his first temptation, Satan is trying to identify potential imbalance in Jesus's basic needs satisfaction by measuring the level of his self-esteem. Effectively, by inviting Jesus to "make bread out of stones",

Satan is inviting Jesus to take the easy path by diverting him from the challenges that lay in front of him. People with low self-esteem tend to avoid challenges because they are afraid of not being able to succeed, and by consequence, face the harsh reality of their mediocrity. From the SDT perspective, self-esteem is "an indicator or eudaimonic well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 326)" and by consequence, low self-esteem results from an imbalance of the three basic needs. As such, through this temptation, Satan is trying to identify if a global imbalance in the three basic needs is effective; his aim is to reach the external regulation level of internalization of the extrinsic motivation with the bread reward. On the other hand, by resisting the first temptation, Jesus invites us to have a better appreciation of our self-esteem through our application in strengthening our basic needs rather than relying on substitutes, "Man cannot live on bread alone, but needs every word that God speaks (Mathews 4. 4)."

In the second temptation, Satan changes strategy. So, by failing to identify a global imbalance in the basic needs satisfaction, he then focuses on identifying potential vulnerabilities that result from non-satisfaction of basic need for autonomy. He, therefore, requests from Jesus to throw himself so that the angels may rescue him. Here, Satan is trying to discover if Jesus's need for autonomy is in deficit of satisfaction. He, therefore, tempts Jesus to try and compensate his lack of autonomy by giving it all up to a higher authority.

The non-satisfaction need for autonomy may lead for the urge to completely lose one's autonomy (i.e. Stockholm syndrome). As such, Satan was trying through extrinsic motivation to reach the level of introjection by making Jesus swallow the loss of autonomy, even though it cannot be digested, as the loss of autonomy might be unstable. By his response, Jesus invites us to maintain our thrive for autonomy, even though the proposed intention presented by Satan conveys the message of acting through the function of discharging one's autonomy to a positive higher authority, Jesus does not fall into this trap and replies, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test (Mathew 4.7)." Through this message, Jesus teaches us never to surrender or give up our own autonomy even with positive intentions because this may lead us to the loss of our free will. As such the lack of free will, lays the path for more dangerous outcomes, such as losing one's autonomy to another person or even worse as one may lose it to Satan himself.

Unsuccessful, with his first two attempts, Satan moves to his third attempt where he deploys his ultimate temptation that seeks to exploit the vulnerabilities resulting from the non-satisfaction of the basic need for competence. By providing a strong compensation for the lack of competence need satisfaction, Satan, here, hopes to achieve the identification level by internalizing the extrinsic motivation of material attributes of wealth and power. His aim is to make Jesus identify the importance of external characteristics of wealth and power to compensate any potential lack of competence and at the same time have Jesus under his control. Since the above-mentioned compensations are and still remain extrinsically motivated, therefore, by enslaving Jesus to them he is, eventually, enslaving him to himself. By stating, "Go away Satan! The scripture says, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him (Mathew 4.10)!" Jesus is inviting us to disregard the materialistic compensations for our need of competency and to effectively feed our need for competence through the development of our own being.

9.0   Conclusion

By adapting the self-determination theory (SDT) to the context of religiously oriented temptations, we were able to provide a solid psychological theory, which complements and enriches the philosophical and theological ones. Moreover, by applying this theory to the three temptations of Jesus, we were able not only to decipher the classical messages already identified through the philosophical and theological approaches, but also, to unveil new messages from Jesus where believers are invited to defend their free will and autonomy. It is also important to note that this study is, somehow, a first attempt where the development of a psychological theory (SDT) has been adapted to religiously oriented temptations. This inspiring mélange may be considered as a solid foundation for future developments in this research area.

Reference

Bigelow, J., Dodds, S. M., & Pargetter, R. (1990). Temptation and the Will. American Philosophical Quarterly, 27 (1), 39-49.

Day, J. (1993). Temptation. American Philosophical Quarterly, 30 (2), 175-181.

Deci, E., & Ryan, R. (2000). The "What" and "Why" of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and Self-Determination of Behavior. Psychological Inquiry, 11 (4), 227-268.

Deci, E., & Ryan, R. (2000). The Darker and Brighter Sides of Human Existence: Basic Psychological Needs as Unifying Concept. Psychological Inquiry, 11 (4), 319-338.

Ellenberger, J. (1970). The discovery of the unconscious: The history and evolution of dynamic psychiatry. New York: Basic Books.

Freud, S. (1959). Formulations regarding the two principles of mental functioning. In E. Jones, Collected papers of Sigmund Freud (J. Reviere, Trans., Vol. 4, pp. 13-21). New York: Basic Books.

G.S. (1890). The meaning of the Temptation. The Old and New Testament Student, 10 (4), 242.

Hoffman, P. (1995). Freedom and Strength of Will: Descartes and Albritton. Philosophical Studies: An international Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition, 77 (2/3), 241-261.

Kaku, M. (2005). Parallel Worlds. New York: First Anchor Books.

Keefe, F. J. (2002). City of God.net. Retrieved from http://www.cityofgod.net

Kent, B. (2007). Aquinas and Weakness of Will. Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 75 (1), 70-91.

Lauri, A., Jensen-Campbell, & Graziano, W. G. (2005). The Two Faces of Temptation: Differing Motives for Self-Control. Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 51 (3), 287-314.

Mathews, G. (1966). Weakness of Will. Mind, New Series, 75 (229), 405-419.

McCown, C. (1919). The Temptation of Jesus Eschatologically and Socially Interpreted. The Biblical World, 53 (4), 402-407.

Nietzsche, F. (1918). The genealogy of morals. New York: Bonnie & Liveright.

Sartre, J. P. (1956). Being and nothingness. New York: Citadel.