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The Nafs's Failure to Recognise Allah: An Analysis from the Rebellion of Iblis to the Followers of Satan

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Abstract

This study examines the problem of the nafs's failure to recognise Allah, the rebellion of Iblis in refusing to prostrate before Adam, and the journey of those who follow Satan by obeying this rebellion, in light of primary sources and in relation to contemporary life. Drawing on the Islamic Sufi tradition, palaeoanthropology, modern neuroscience, and psychological data, the individual and societal consequences of the nafs (ego) overriding the intellect and divine consciousness are discussed within a holistic framework. An interdisciplinary perspective is presented, integrating data from the Qur'an, hadith, and classical Islamic thought with modern psychology, evolutionary ethics, and philosophy. Within the framework of the nafs's stages of ammāra, lawwāma, and muṭma'inna, the study analyses how pride, denial, and rebellion transform individuals and societies into 'the party of Satan.' Membership in Satan's party manifests today in impulsive behaviours at the level of the nafs al-ammāra, consumerism, obesity, and existential crises. The study proposes that humanity's exit from this existential crisis is possible through holistic self-discipline (riyāḍa), dhikr, and moral maturation, and aims to offer a comprehensive framework for humanity's journey toward moral maturity by addressing this narrative at cosmic, individual-psychological, and social levels.

Keywords: Nafs; Recognition of Allah; Iblis; Satan; Pride; Moral Development; Islamic Psychology; Riyāḍa; Qur'an; Neuroscience

1. Introduction

At the centre of humanity's existential journey lies a profound responsibility inherent to the condition of creatureliness: to recognise Allah and to submit to Him. Yet this recognition and submission is not an ontological necessity but a possible process, owing to the existence of free will in the structure of being. It is within this space of possibility that theological-psychological processes such as the nafs's inclination toward pride, the rebellion of Iblis, and participation in the party of Satan emerge.

The Islamic intellectual tradition and Sufi narratives ground the internal conflict of the human being in an ontological foundation. According to creation metaphors, when Allah created the intellect (aql), it immediately recognised divine authority and truth, declaring, 'You are my Lord and I am Your servant.' By contrast, when the nafs was created, it assumed a self-centred and separatist stance, responding, 'You are You, and I am I,' thereby refusing to recognise Allah (Al-Ghazali, 2018). This ontological difference reveals the destructive, impulsive, and divinely resistant potential inherent in the nature of the nafs. It was only after being disciplined through riyāḍa (fasting and self-restraint) that the nafs recognised its own helplessness and submitted to truth. This demonstrates that the foundation of the human existential journey is the training of this primal ego and its subjection to the control of the intellect and the spirit (Demirkuş, 2025c).

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Demirkuş (2025b) argues that in the phylogenetic developmental process of humanity, moral maturity is still at the stage of a civilisation roughly seventeen years of age, and that humanity will achieve cosmic maturity over the course of millions of years. Within this framework, the nafs's failure to recognise Allah and its drift toward pride transcends individual deviation and becomes a fundamental explanatory concept for understanding the collective developmental journey of humankind.

The Qur'an recounts this journey in its most succinct form in verses 30–38 of Surah al-Baqarah: creation, vicegerency (khilāfa), the command to prostrate, the refusal of Iblis, and the trial of the first human being. This cosmic dramatic process may be read not merely as a historical event, but as an existential struggle that continues in every individual's inner world and in the collective consciousness of every society.

This study aims to present a comprehensive analysis of the structure of the nafs and its capacity to recognise Allah, the roots of Iblis's rebellion, the mechanisms of participation in the party of Satan, their relationship to the psychological and social life of the contemporary human being, and the path to salvation. The APA 7 citation standard has been applied throughout, and Islamic sources and modern academic literature have been engaged through an integrated methodology.

2. Material and Method

This study adopts a qualitative, theoretical, and interdisciplinary research approach. The Qur'an and authentic hadith collections were employed as primary sources, while the works of classical exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī (923/2001), Ibn Kathīr (1373/1999), and al-Rāzī (1210/1981) were utilised as analytical frameworks. Al-Ghazālī's (1058–1111/2010; 2018) ontological analyses of the intellect-nafs relationship from the Sufi tradition served as the primary reference work. In the context of contemporary Islamic psychology and moral philosophy, the studies of Hanna (2012), Al-Attas (1993), and Kohlberg (1981) were consulted, while from a modern neuroscience perspective, reference was made to Lembke (2024), Seligman (2011), and ScienceDaily (2023). Among the original contributions of the study are Demirkuş's phylogenetic age hypothesis (2025b) and his recent works on nafs discipline and riyāḍa (2025a; 2025c; 2025d). The methods employed include comparative textual analysis, conceptual synthesis, and critical interpretation.

3. The Structure of The Nafs and The Question of Recognising Allah

3.1. The Ontological Structure of the Nafs and the Primordial Conflict in Creation

In Islamic thought, the 'nafs' denotes the fundamental existential dimension at the core of the human personality—possessing free will, bearing moral responsibility, and determining the individual's relationship with Allah. Al-Ghazālī (1058–1111/2010) defined the nafs as a multi-layered structure encompassing both cognitive capacity and the faculties of desire and anger. This multi-layered structure renders the process of the nafs recognising Allah simultaneously possible and fragile.

Sufi narratives convey this ontological conflict between intellect and nafs through a striking metaphor: when Allah created the intellect, it immediately recognised divine authority, declaring, 'You are my Lord and I am Your servant.' The nafs, however, upon its creation, revealed its self-centred and separatist disposition with the words, 'You are You, and I am I.' Yet when Allah subjected the nafs to discipline through riyāḍa—namely, forty days of fasting and self-examination—the nafs acknowledged its helplessness and submitted (Al-Ghazali, 2018). This narrative demonstrates that the nafs does not innately possess the capacity to recognise divine truth, and that such capacity is acquired only through discipline, self-restraint, and spiritual purification.

The 'rider and mount' metaphor employed by Al-Ghazālī in this context carries a profound psychological depth that resonates with modern neuroscience: the nafs is a powerful yet blind mount, symbolising the limbic system's tendency toward immediate pleasure and impulse. The intellect, by contrast, is the wise rider who must guide it correctly, corresponding to the prefrontal cortex's functions of planning, self-regulation, and moral judgement (Al-Ghazali, 2018; Demirkuş, 2025a). The event of Iblis's refusal to prostrate before Adam may be read precisely through this metaphor: the rider loses control, and the blind mount—the ego—seizes the will.

The Qur'an draws attention to three fundamental stages of the nafs: ammāra, lawwāma, and muṭma'inna. The nafs al-ammāra is the nafs that commands evil and inclines toward desire and pride: 'I do not acquit myself—indeed the nafs is prone to commanding evil, except those upon whom my Lord has mercy' (Yūsuf 12:53). The nafs al-lawwāma is a sign of the awakening of conscience and is referred to in the verse, 'I swear by the self-reproaching nafs' (al-Qiyāma 75:2).

The nafs al-muṭma'inna, the mature nafs, represents the pinnacle of connection with Allah: 'O tranquil soul! Return to your Lord' (al-Fajr 89:27–28).

Demirkuş (2025b) correlates these three stages with humanity's phylogenetic development, arguing that the great majority of humankind still resides at the ammāra level, and that only select individuals attain the stages of lawwāma and muṭma'inna. From this perspective, the rebellion of Iblis and participation in the party of Satan may be regarded as the most extreme manifestation of the nafs at the ammāra stage.

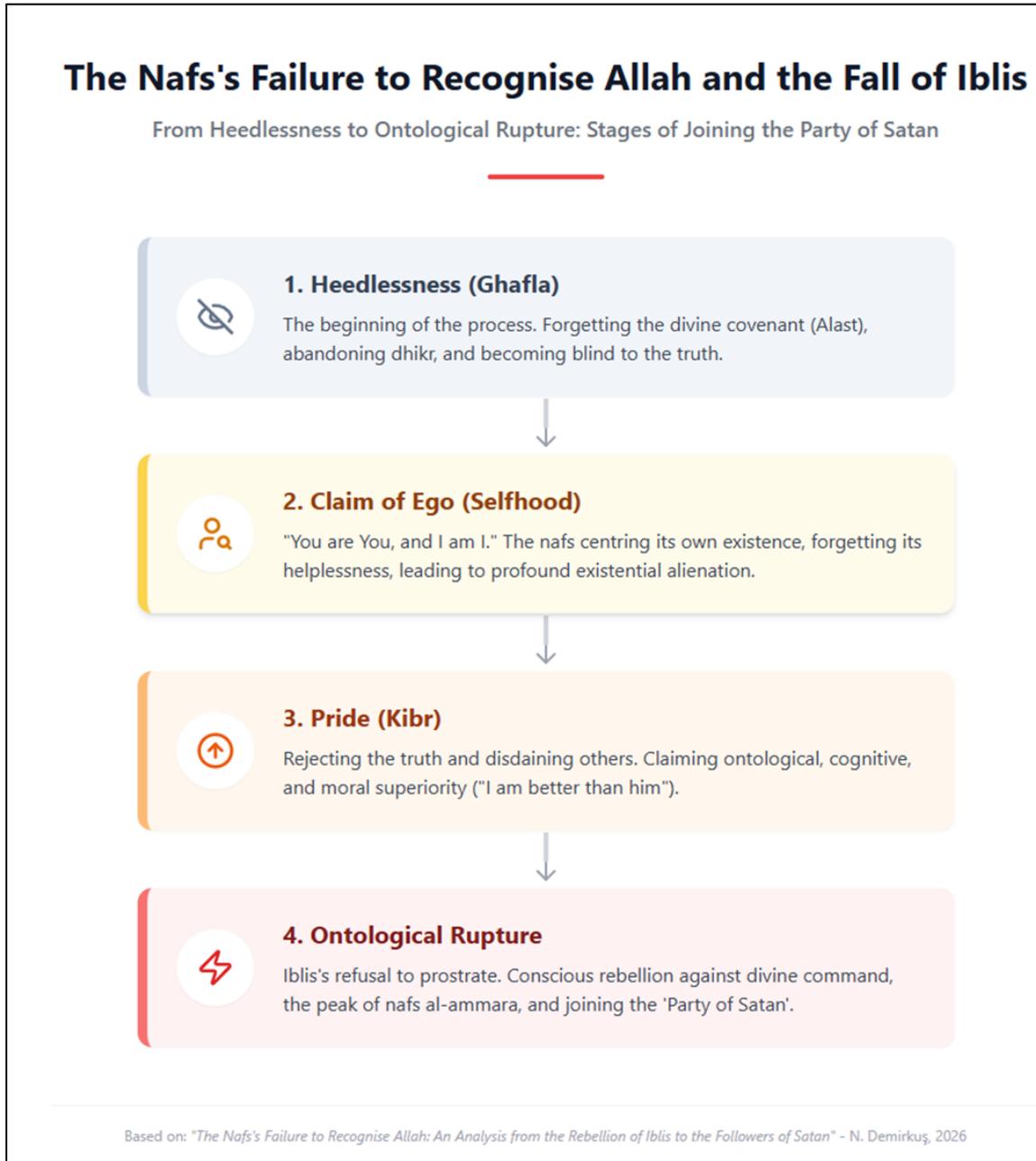


Figure 1 The developmental stages of the nafs's failure to recognise the Divine, illustrating the transition from initial heedlessness (ghafla) to the final ontological rupture exemplified by Iblis

3.2. The Recognition of Allah (Ma'rifatullāh) and the Fiṭra

The question of recognising Allah is fundamentally linked in Islamic thought to the concept of fiṭra. 'And when your Lord took from the children of Adam—from their loins—their descendants and made them testify of themselves, saying to them: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes, we have testified' (al-A'rāf 7:172). This cosmic covenant scene, known as the 'Day of Alast' (yawm al-alast), indicates that every soul recognises Allah at the moment of creation.

Yet worldly life contains veils capable of obscuring this recognition. Al-Ghazālī (1058–1111/2010) likens the nafs's negative influence upon the heart to a layer of rust that darkens a mirror when not removed. Hanna (2012), from the perspective of modern Islamic psychology, conceptualises the nafs's state of failing to recognise Allah as 'existential alienation,' noting that this condition manifests in psychological symptoms such as anxiety, meaninglessness, and moral corruption.

Al-Attas (1993) emphasises that *fiṭra* constitutes the capacity to recognise Allah, but that this capacity may be suppressed by *nisyān* (forgetfulness) and *ghafla* (heedlessness). Within this framework, the drama of Iblis is not a story of forgetting, but of conscious denial and pride; it therefore represents the most severe form of the nafs's failure to recognise Allah.

4. Iblis's Refusal to Prostrate Before Adam: The Cosmic Scene of The Nafs's Rebellion

4.1. Qur'anic Narrative and Theological Dimensions

The verse recounting the rebellion of Iblis is repeated across numerous surahs of the Qur'an. In Surah al-Baqarah, the divine command is related as follows: 'And when We said to the angels, Prostrate before Adam; they prostrated, except for Iblis. He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers' (al-Baqarah 2:34). Surah Ṣād, in turn, conveys the declaration of this pride from Iblis's own mouth: 'He said: I am better than him; You created me from fire and created him from clay' (Ṣād 38:76).

In analysing this narrative, al-Ṭabarī (923/2001) identifies two fundamental elements underlying Iblis's refusal to prostrate: analogical reasoning (the proposition that fire is superior to clay) and conscious disobedience to the divine command. These two elements constitute the essence of the nafs's failure to recognise Allah; for Iblis does not deny the existence and power of Allah, but rather places his own intellect and analogy above the divine command. According to Demirkuş (2025d), this attitude is directly connected to the inability of pre-Adamic beings to bear moral responsibility: a being guided solely by an animal nafs cannot fulfil the duty of vicegerency.

Ibn Kathīr (1373/1999), in his interpretation of this passage, emphasises that the error of Iblis does not stem from a lack of knowledge but from pride and envy. He knows Allah; indeed he speaks with Him. However, the jealousy of his nafs and the passion for selfhood prevent this knowledge from being transformed into submission. Here emerges the critical distinction between 'knowing' Allah and 'submitting' to Allah.

4.2. The Pride of Iblis: The Prototypical Manifestation of the Nafs al-Ammāra and the Balance of Jalāl and Jamāl

In analysing the rebellion of Iblis, al-Rāzī (1210/1981) identifies three dimensions of pride: ontological pride (regarding one's own essence as superior), cognitive pride (placing one's own analogy above the divine command), and moral pride (disdaining submission to the will of Allah). According to al-Rāzī, this threefold structure of pride constitutes the most dangerous state of the nafs.

The rebellion of Iblis also symbolises a rupture that disrupts the balance of Allah's attributes. The Jalāl attributes of Allah (power, wrath, majesty) and the Jamāl attributes (mercy, wisdom, love) constitute the two poles of the divine order. The pride of Iblis severed the Jalāl energy—the drive for power, hierarchy, and superiority—from the balancing mercy and wisdom of Jamāl, transforming it into a destructive corruption (Al-Ghazali, 2018). In this framework, the common characteristic of individuals or societies who join the party of Satan is their pursuit of drives for power, interest, and superiority devoid of mercy, justice, and an awareness of divine responsibility.

From a modern psychological perspective, the works of psychoanalysts such as Kohut (1971) and Kernberg (1975) on narcissistic personality structures illuminate the disposition of Iblis. The narcissistic individual constructs their sense of self-worth upon the denigration of others, perceives submission to authority as a threat to the self, and loses the capacity for empathy. Kohlberg (1981) notes that at the most primitive stage of moral development, the individual attends only to their own interest and superiority—which precisely corresponds to the attitude of Iblis.

In interpreting the rebellion of Iblis within a phylogenetic developmental framework, Demirkuş (2025b) emphasises that this rebellion continues in the collective unconscious of humankind as well: the individual at the ammāra state of the nafs, just like Iblis, places their own intellect and nafs above every external authority—and ultimately above the divine will.

4.3. Iblis's Request for Respite and His Four-Directional Strategic Plan

After being cast out, Iblis sought respite and proclaimed an explicit counter-programme: 'He said: Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path. Then I will come to them from before them and from behind them and on their right and on their left, and You will not find most of them grateful' (al-A'rāf 7:16–17). This declaration is not merely the announcement of an individual rebellion, but of a systematic and all-encompassing counter-programme.

Al-Ṭabarī (923/2001) expounds upon the four-directional encirclement in Iblis's plan in its psychological and social dimensions: approaching from the front—making the pleasures of the world appear attractive; approaching from behind—weakening the fear of death and faith in the hereafter; approaching from the right—making religious instruments into ends in themselves and leading into hypocrisy; approaching from the left—adorning desires and forbidden acts. This four-dimensional strategy appears to be in remarkable alignment with contemporary media manipulation, consumerism, the instrumentalisation of religion, and a culture of immediate gratification. Fromm (1964), indeed, analysed the existential alienation of modern humanity precisely through these mechanisms, arguing that the individual, having ceased to be themselves, becomes an object of consumption and appearances. Furthermore, Evrim Ağacı (2025) demonstrates that cognitive traps such as overconfidence bias and confirmation bias prevent the individual from questioning a dysfunctional system, thereby reinforcing the effectiveness of Iblis's strategy.

5. Joining The Party of Satan: The Nafs Opening The Doors To Iblis

5.1. The Qur'anic Definition of the Party of Satan and the Context of 'Adolescent Humanity'

The Qur'an characterises those who follow the rebellion of Iblis as 'the party of Satan' (ḥizb al-shayṭān): 'Satan has overcome them and caused them to forget the remembrance of Allah. Those are the party of Satan. Unquestionably, the party of Satan—they will be the losers' (al-Mujādila 58:19). Noteworthy in this verse is that the defining characteristic of the party of Satan is forgetting Allah—abandoning dhikrullāh.

When evaluated within the context of evolutionary psychology and the phylogenetic age hypothesis, humanity, although having completed its biological evolution, still behaves at the level of a 'seventeen-year-old adolescent' in terms of moral evolution (Demirkuş, 2025b). Just as in the adolescent brain the prefrontal cortex (will/intellect) has not yet fully established dominance over the limbic system (pleasure/nafs), so too do the masses who follow the path of Iblis pursue impulsive, self-centred, and short-term pleasures. The question posed by the angels in the Qur'an—'Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood?' (al-Baqarah 2:30)—reveals how beings acting solely with their animal nafs, without a moral compass, can bring about destruction (Tabari, 2001 Demirkuş, 2025d). To join the party of Satan signifies humanity's abandonment of the consciousness of moral responsibility—vicegerency (khalāfa)—and its regression to this primal, destructive 'jinn corruption' energy.

The opposing camp is the party of the Most Merciful: 'Those who are allied with Allah—it is they who are the successful' (al-Mujādila 58:22). The choice between these two parties is determined by the exercise of free will and reflects which stage the nafs occupies.

5.2. Mechanisms of Joining the Party of Satan: From Insinuation to Sealing

Joining the party of Satan is not a sudden rupture but a gradual and difficult-to-detect process. Al-Ghazālī (1058–1111/2010), in the *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, analyses this process in four stages. The first is the stage of 'waswasa' (insinuation)—the stage at which Iblis plants an idea or seed of doubt in the heart. The second is the 'approval of the nafs al-ammāra'—the support of desires for this insinuation. The third is 'habit and pattern'—the solidification of the disposition in question through repeated actions. The fourth is the 'sealing of the heart'—the state in which the nafs no longer questions this disposition.

This four-stage model corresponds to theories of attachment and habit formation in behavioural psychology. Duhigg (2012) demonstrates that habits are reinforced through a 'cue-routine-reward' loop and become automatic over time. The same mechanism operates to reinforce the nafs's inclination toward evil: the 'rewards' offered by Iblis—immediate pleasure, the gratification of pride, the inflation of the self—strengthen the nafs's loop of inclination toward evil.

Hanna (2012) terms this process, from the perspective of Islamic psychology, a 'cycle of spiritual degeneration,' noting that as the individual moves further from Allah, their inner void will increase, a dependence on external stimuli will develop to fill this void, and this will drive the nafs into a deeper ammāra state. Lembke (2024) likewise demonstrates that the existential void arising from the modern person's inability to find meaning drives them toward pleasure and

dopamine addiction. This addiction, just as in the pride of Iblis, is the neurobiological correlate of placing one's own desires at the centre of the universe.

5.3. Pride: The Legacy Transmitted from Iblis to Humanity

The Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) defines pride as follows: 'Pride is rejecting the truth and disdaining people' (Muslim, Imān 147). This definition perfectly encapsulates the disposition of Iblis: rejecting the truth (the command of Allah) and disdaining Adam. The nafs that joins the party of Satan similarly displays these two fundamental dispositions.

Twenge and Campbell (2009) document that narcissism in modern societies has been increasing systematically since the 1970s, and that this increase has weakened social bonds, fractured empathy, and increased aggressive tendencies. This sociological finding illustrates how the legacy of Iblis—his pride and tendency to disdain others—has spread at a societal scale.

In interpreting this situation within a phylogenetic developmental framework, Demirkuş (2025b) emphasises that current humanity is in its nafs al-ammāra-dominant phase and that pride has become not an individual but a collective pathology. Nevertheless, moral pioneers who emerge in fields such as climate activism, the human rights movement, and conscientious objection may be regarded as signs of humanity's transition to the lawwāma stage.

6. The Nafs's Failure to Recognise Allah: Individual and Social Dimensions

6.1. Individual Dimension: Heedlessness, the Abandonment of Dhikr, and the Crisis of Meaning

The Qur'an characterises the nafs's forgetting of Allah as 'ghafla' (heedlessness) and clearly proclaims the ruin that accompanies it: 'And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient' (al-Ḥashr 59:19). The theological dimension of heedlessness is a form of existential blindness; the nafs can neither see Allah nor its own true identity.

Modern psychology conceptualises this condition as a 'crisis of meaning.' Frankl (1963) demonstrated that a lack of meaning drives the individual into an existential void and that this void is filled with substitute satisfactions such as pleasure, power, or addiction. Lembke (2024) documents that this void manifests in the digital age in the form of dopamine addiction, demonstrating that instant screen pleasures, social media validation, and excessive consumption deepen, rather than resolve, existential dissatisfaction. This mechanism directly corresponds to the lived experience of the individual who abandons dhikr and submits to the nafs's ammāra state.

Al-Ghazālī (1058–1111/2010) notes that dhikr is an antidote to heedlessness and protects the heart against the infiltration of Iblis. The nafs's failure to recognise Allah enters a vicious cycle upon the abandonment of dhikr: as heedlessness increases, dhikr diminishes; as dhikr diminishes, heedlessness deepens; and the nafs submits ever more fully to the ammāra state.

6.2. Social Dimension: Consumerism, Obesity, and Collective Heedlessness

The pride and impulsiveness arising from the nafs's failure to recognise Allah has transformed, in the modern age, into individual and global crises. Humanity's singular focus on the demands of its own nafs al-ammāra is concretised today in digital addictions, rampant consumerism, and the obesity crisis. The picture of global injustice—in which millions suffer from hunger on the one hand, while billions struggle with obesity resulting from unbounded consumption on the other—is the most concrete indicator that the vicegerency trial has been lost and that the satanic system of selfish capitalist consumption is in operation (Demirkuş, 2025b).

The Qur'an also draws attention to the social dimension of individual heedlessness. Islamic narratives recounting the ancient vicegerency of the jinn (al-Baqarah 2:30) demonstrate how corruption and bloodshed can bring a civilisation to ruin. Al-Ṭabarī (923/2001) relays on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās: the jinn wrought corruption in the earth, shed blood, and incited war; and Allah removed them from the earth through the angels.

This narrative of collective collapse corresponds to the dynamics of the decline of historical civilisations. Toynbee (1961) argued that the collapse of historical civilisations stems primarily not from external forces but from internal moral corruption. Demirkuş (2025b), interpreting this philosophy of history within an Islamic cosmological framework, positions the jinn's failure of vicegerency as a concrete example of collective degeneration arising from the nafs's failure to recognise Allah.

Similar dynamics are visible today: the climate crisis is, in large measure, the product of a collective heedlessness that places short-term calculations of interest above long-term ecological responsibility (Gardiner, 2011). Markowitz and Shariff (2012) have demonstrated that moral and justice perceptions regarding the climate crisis can feed into both cooperative and conflictual dynamics. This situation reveals the cost of the nafs's forgetting Allah and its responsibility toward creation in the form of collective catastrophes.

7. The Nafs Re-Recognising Allah: The Path to Salvation

7.1. Repentance: The Nafs's Severance from Iblis

The Qur'an recounts that Adam and Eve, after eating the forbidden fruit, turned immediately toward repentance and that this repentance was accepted: 'They said: Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers' (al-A'rāf 7:23). The difference between this scene of repentance and the disposition of Iblis is that the nafs acknowledges its own inadequacy and its dependence upon Allah.

Iblis, however, does not repent; on the contrary, he blames Allah for his expulsion: 'He said: Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path' (al-A'rāf 7:16). This sharp contrast reveals the two paths of the nafs: to return to Allah through repentance, or to persist in pride and continue on the satanic course.

7.2. Riyāḍa and Nafs Discipline: From the Ancient Tradition to Modern Neuroscience

The path to salvation from the destructive journey that began with the rebellion of Iblis and culminated in the modern person's existential crises lies in the transition from the nafs al-ammāra to the nafs al-muṭma'inna. While this transition is achieved in the ancient Sufi tradition through riyāḍa (self-discipline), dhikr, and muḥāsaba (self-examination), it is also supported today by their neurobiological equivalents: mindfulness, digital detox, and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programmes (ScienceDaily, 2023; Demirkuş, 2025c).

In his study synthesising the understanding of self-discipline in Sufism with modern neuroscience, Demirkuş (2025a) demonstrates that riyāḍa practices strengthen the prefrontal cortex and increase conscious control over the limbic system's impulsive responses. The discipline of impulses, dopamine receptors, and the immediate demands of the limbic system strengthens the prefrontal cortex—the moral centre of the brain—thereby causing the biological process and spiritual transformation to mutually reinforce each other.

The PERMA model (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment) advanced by positive psychology, and the development of high emotional intelligence, are the modern scientific reflections of the nafs al-muṭma'inna (Seligman, 2011). Within this framework, Sufi nafs discipline and psychological well-being approaches converge on the same goal—the nafs recognising Allah and submitting to Him—through parallel but distinct paths.

7.3. From the Nafs al-Lawwāma to the Nafs al-Muṭma'inna: Moral Maturation

The nafs al-lawwāma is the nafs that reproaches itself after having witnessed its own evil deeds. This stage marks the beginning of separation from Iblis; for Iblis never reproached himself, but always blamed another—Allah or humanity. The nafs at the lawwāma stage takes the first step of departure from the party of Satan through an awakening of conscience.

In Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development, this transition corresponds to the elevation from conventional morality to post-conventional morality: the individual now acts not merely under social pressure or fear of punishment, but in accordance with internalised universal principles. According to Demirkuş's (2025b) phylogenetic age hypothesis, these individual instances of transition are the forerunners of humanity's collective moral maturation.

The nafs al-muṭma'inna represents the complete realisation of the return to Allah. The nafs at this stage has fully separated from the party of Satan and has acquired a resistance, like a fortress, against the provocations of Iblis. Without the achievement of this inner victory, neither can individual peace (Jamāl) be established, nor can a moral foundation exist for the cosmic civilisation humanity will build in the space age of the future (Demirkuş, 2025b). The following words of the Prophet (peace be upon him) summarise the outcome of this transformation: 'The strong person is not the one who can overpower others in wrestling; rather, the strong person is the one who controls themselves in a moment of anger' (Bukhārī, Adab 76).

8. Contemporary Relevance

8.1. The Strategy of Iblis in the Digital Age and Cognitive Traps

The four-directional strategy of Iblis (al-A'rāf 7:16–17) manifests in the digital age through considerably more sophisticated instruments. Social media algorithms prioritise content that feeds the nafs al-ammāra, increasing the individual's comparison of themselves with others and thereby intensifying pride or envy. Twenge (2017) documents that social media use has significantly increased narcissism, depression, and feelings of meaninglessness among young people.

Cognitive research compiled by Evrim Ağacı (2025) demonstrates that mental traps such as overconfidence bias and confirmation bias prevent the individual from recognising that they are operating within a dysfunctional system. These biases are the daily-life reflection of Iblis's disposition—'I am better than him' (Şād 38:76): the individual, through a form of mental blindness incapable of perceiving the limitations of their own intellect, opens the door to Iblis's strategy.

Yet the digital age also presents unprecedented opportunities for the recognition of Allah and for dhikr: instant access to the corpus of the Qur'an and hadith, international circles of scholarship, and online worship communities. This demonstrates that the same medium can serve both Iblis's strategy and the nafs's recognition of Allah, and that free will and the stage at which the nafs resides are determinative in this choice.

8.2. The Collective Party of Satan: Structural Oppression and Systemic Pride

Participation in the party of Satan is not merely an individual matter. Structural racism, economic exploitation, environmental destruction, and war economies may be regarded as institutional forms of collective pride and the failure to recognise Allah. In positioning climate change as a moral problem, Gardiner (2011) is in fact diagnosing a concrete manifestation of collective heedlessness—the nafs's forgetting of Allah and its responsibility toward creation.

Notwithstanding this, Demirkuş (2025b) offers an encouraging perspective: climate activists, human rights advocates, and peace-builders function as 'lawwāma pioneers' in humanity's phylogenetic moral development, representing those who take Allah's side against the collective encirclement of the party of Satan.

9. Discussion

This study has examined the nafs's failure to recognise Allah, the rebellion of Iblis, and the dynamics of participation in the party of Satan through an integrated perspective. The principal findings may be summarised as follows.

First, the nafs's failure to recognise Allah is not an ontological necessity but the product of a choice sustained through free will. Every nafs is endowed, through fiṭra, with the capacity to recognise Allah; yet this capacity may be suppressed through heedlessness, pride, and submission to the strategies of Iblis (al-A'rāf 7:172). The intellect-nafs conflict in Sufi narratives (Al-Ghazali, 2018) illuminates both the theological and psychological dimensions of this process.

Second, the rebellion of Iblis—rejecting the truth and disdaining humanity—is the prototypical and most extreme manifestation of the nafs in its ammāra state. The disposition of Iblis severed Allah's Jalāl attributes from the balancing wisdom of Jamāl, and corresponds precisely to the most primitive stage of Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development and to the narcissistic personality dynamics of Kohut (1971) and Kernberg (1975).

Third, participation in the party of Satan is a gradual process: insinuation, approval, habit, and sealing. This process operates at both individual and collective levels, manifesting today in consumerism, obesity, digital addiction (Lembke, 2024), structural oppression, and collective heedlessness.

Fourth, the path to salvation passes through repentance, riyāḍa, dhikr, and the maturation of the nafs from lawwāma to muṭma'inna. The neurobiological dimension of riyāḍa (Demirkuş, 2025a; ScienceDaily, 2023) and the psychological well-being afforded by the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) confirm that this ancient path converges with modern science.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study positions the rebellion of Iblis and the phenomenon of the party of Satan not as a historical or metaphysical narrative, but as a dynamic that is intrinsic to the structure of the nafs and that continues at individual, social, and cosmic levels. When the Qur'anic framework is brought into dialogue with modern psychology and evolutionary ethics, the nafs's journey of failing to recognise Allah is positioned at the centre of humanity's endeavour to understand itself. To heed the divine command—'Read' (Iqrā')—means to read both the book of revelation and the book of nature; and this reading constitutes the true gateway to departure from the party of Satan and return to Allah.

Compliance with ethical standards

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