ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL
Available Online: https://assajournal.com
Vol. 05 No. 01. Jan-March 2026.Page# 1338-1348
Print ISSN: 3006-2497 Online ISSN: 3006-2500
Platform & Workflow by: Open Journal Systems

Beyond Secularization: Cognitive Acceleration and the Structural Incompatibility of Traditional Theology

Umar Wyne
M.Phil. Philosophy, Independent Researcher
wyumar@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
Over the past three centuries, the relationship between theology and knowledge has undergone profound structural transformation. While secularization theory has traditionally interpreted rising non-religiosity as institutional decline or ideological atheism, this paper proposes an alternative diagnostic framework. It argues that the contemporary moment is characterized not merely by disbelief but by an epistemic recalibration driven by cognitive acceleration. Tracing the historical differentiation of theology from empirical explanation since the Scientific Revolution, the study situates the present era within a longer trajectory of rationalization and disenchantment. However, unlike earlier phases of modernization, the twenty-first century introduces unprecedented acceleration through advances in neuroscience, molecular genetics, and artificial intelligence. These developments reshape explanatory expectations by privileging mechanistic coherence, algorithmic modeling, and biological intervention. The paper advances the concept of a "relatability crisis" to describe the increasing friction between inherited theological metaphysics and dominant scientific paradigms. It suggests that what is often interpreted as the spread of atheism may instead reflect structural incompatibility between metaphysical grammar and accelerated epistemic regimes. The study remains diagnostic rather than prescriptive, contributing to debates in secularization theory, philosophy of religion, and intellectual history by reframing non-religiosity as a question of epistemic compatibility rather than ideological rejection.

Keywords: *Secularization; Epistemic Acceleration; Theology; Artificial Intelligence; Neuroscience; Metaphysical Plausibility; Modernity*

Introduction

Over the past three centuries, the structure of human knowledge has undergone a transformation of exceptional magnitude. The Scientific Revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not merely produce new discoveries in astronomy or physics; it reorganized the very criteria through which truth claims were validated. The displacement of theological authority from its epistemic centrality marked the beginning of a prolonged civilizational transition one that continues to unfold in increasingly complex forms (1).

Prior to this shift, theological frameworks served not only as systems of spiritual meaning but also as explanatory architectures for natural phenomena. Cosmology, medicine, moral order, and political legitimacy were interwoven with religious doctrine. The early modern rupture challenged this fusion. When Galileo's observations destabilized Aristotelian cosmology, and when Descartes restructured epistemology around methodological doubt, the implications extended beyond isolated scientific disputes (2). These developments inaugurated a long process in which revelation ceased to function as the primary epistemic authority in the emerging European intellectual order.

The Enlightenment deepened this transformation by institutionalizing reason as the dominant arbiter of legitimacy. Thinkers such as Kant reframed autonomy as a condition of intellectual maturity, arguing that humanity must emerge from "self-incurred immaturity" by exercising independent rational judgment (3). The broader Enlightenment project did not universally reject religion, but it insisted that religious claims submit to rational scrutiny. In this way, the eighteenth century marked not merely a political shift toward secular governance, but a structural reconfiguration of the hierarchy of knowledge.

Max Weber later characterized this trajectory as the "disenchantment of the world," a historical movement in which metaphysical and magical explanations receded under processes of rationalization and bureaucratization (4). For Weber, disenchantment did not necessarily imply the disappearance of religion; rather, it signified the erosion of its monopoly over explanatory authority. The modern world, in Weber's account, becomes calculable, predictable, and systematized.

Twentieth-century sociological discourse further developed the secularization thesis. Peter Berger initially proposed that modernization inevitably leads to the decline of religious authority structures (5). Although Berger later revised aspects of this thesis, the broader academic debate continued to treat secularization primarily as a sociological phenomenon measured in declining church attendance, reduced clerical authority, and privatization of belief. Charles Taylor, however, introduced a more nuanced framework in A Secular Age, arguing that modernity transforms the "conditions of belief" rather than merely reducing religiosity (6). In Taylor's account, belief becomes one option among many within a pluralistic horizon, rather than the default cognitive background of society.

Yet while much of the existing literature has focused on institutional religion and sociological patterns of belief, comparatively less attention has been devoted to the structural transformation of metaphysical plausibility itself. The present moment appears to represent not simply a continuation of Enlightenment secularization, but an acceleration of epistemic restructuring.

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have witnessed the convergence of several transformative developments. Advances in neuroscience have increasingly translated classical psychological constructs into neural correlates, reframing discussions of consciousness, identity, and agency in biological terms (7). Molecular genetics has moved from descriptive mapping to active intervention, with gene-editing technologies such as CRISPR enabling direct modification of biological code (8). Simultaneously, artificial intelligence has emerged not merely as a technological tool, but as a cognitive amplifier capable of compressing analysis, prediction, and pattern recognition into algorithmic systems operating at scales beyond unaided human cognition (9).

This convergence introduces a new phase in the long arc of intellectual transformation. If the seventeenth century initiated the decoupling of knowledge from theology, the twenty-first century appears to be intensifying that process under conditions of unprecedented speed. Knowledge production is no longer incremental; it is exponential. The temporal distance between conceptual innovation and practical application has narrowed dramatically. Under such conditions, inherited metaphysical constructs encounter interpretive pressures distinct from those faced in earlier periods of modernization.

Contemporary public discourse often interprets rising non-religiosity as evidence of expanding atheism. However, framing the phenomenon primarily in terms of belief versus disbelief may obscure deeper structural dynamics. A growing body of scholarship suggests that secularization is not simply ideological rejection but involves shifts in cognitive frameworks and epistemic

expectations (10). When explanatory standards become increasingly mechanistic, computational, and empirically constrained, metaphysical claims must operate within an altered evaluative environment.

Historically, explanatory systems grounded in mythic or animistic frameworks gradually lost epistemic authority as mechanistic models of nature expanded. The decline of witchcraft as a dominant explanatory system in early modern Europe did not occur solely because it was philosophically refuted; rather, alternative frameworks emerged that rendered its explanatory necessity redundant (11). The plausibility of certain belief systems diminished as competing models proved more predictive and operationally effective.

The present paper proposes that a similar dynamic may be unfolding at the level of traditional theological metaphysics. The question is not whether religion will disappear, nor whether atheism will prevail. Instead, the central concern is whether inherited metaphysical constructs such as divine intervention, angelic agency, immaterial soul, and transcendent cosmology are encountering a crisis of relatability within an accelerated epistemic environment shaped by neuroscience, biotechnology, and artificial intelligence.

This does not imply that religious belief is irrational, nor that metaphysical inquiry lacks legitimacy. Rather, it suggests that the standards through which explanatory coherence is assessed have undergone structural modification. As Foucault argued, every historical epoch operates within an underlying epistemic regime that determines the conditions under which knowledge claims become intelligible (12). If the epistemic regime of the twenty-first century is characterized by computational modeling, biological reductionism, and data-driven validation, then theological language must negotiate its plausibility within that altered terrain.

The central thesis of this paper, therefore, is diagnostic rather than polemical. What appears as the rise of atheism may be more accurately understood as an epistemic recalibration occurring under conditions of cognitive acceleration. The issue may not be disbelief in God per se, but a transformation in the structural compatibility between inherited metaphysical frameworks and contemporary explanatory paradigms.

The following sections will examine this hypothesis by situating it within historical trajectories of intellectual transformation, analyzing the role of cognitive acceleration, and assessing whether we are witnessing not the eradication of religion, but a shift in its epistemic relatability.

Literature Review

The question of religion's transformation under modernity has occupied scholars across sociology, philosophy, anthropology, and political theory for over a century. However, the dominant analytical lens has largely revolved around secularization as a sociological process rather than as an epistemic restructuring of metaphysical plausibility.

Classical secularization theory, particularly in the mid-twentieth century, framed modernization as inversely correlated with religiosity. Industrialization, urbanization, bureaucratization, and scientific advancement were understood to weaken religious institutions and diminish public expressions of faith (13). Within this framework, religion was expected to retreat into private life as rationalized structures expanded.

Peter Berger's early formulation of secularization suggested that pluralism undermines religious certainty by exposing belief systems to competing worldviews (14). Although Berger later acknowledged the persistence of religion globally, the structural insight remains influential: modernization destabilizes taken-for-granted metaphysical horizons.

Max Weber's analysis of rationalization laid foundational groundwork for understanding this destabilization (4). For Weber, modernity replaces enchanted cosmologies with procedural rationality. Yet Weber did not argue for the elimination of religion; rather, he identified a

transformation in its social function. Religion becomes compartmentalized within differentiated spheres of life rather than structuring the totality of experience.

In the late twentieth century, José Casanova challenged deterministic secularization narratives by demonstrating that religion often re-enters public space under modern conditions (15). This critique complicated the assumption that modernization automatically produces disbelief. Instead, religion may adapt institutionally and politically even within secular societies.

Charles Taylor extended the debate by arguing that secular modernity changes not simply institutional structures but the "conditions of belief" (6). In pre-modern societies, belief in God was virtually unchallenged as the background horizon of meaning. In modernity, however, belief becomes contestable. What shifts is not merely adherence, but plausibility structure.

More recently, scholars such as Jürgen Habermas have proposed the idea of a "post-secular" society, in which religious and secular reasoning must coexist within democratic discourse (16). Habermas does not argue for a return to theological dominance; rather, he acknowledges that religion persists even under rationalized conditions. The post-secular framework thus shifts the discussion from decline to negotiation.

Despite these refinements, much of the literature remains institution-focused. It examines church attendance, political theology, public religion, or identity formation. Comparatively less emphasis has been placed on how emerging scientific paradigms transform the cognitive frameworks within which metaphysical claims are interpreted.

The philosophy of science offers additional insight into this issue. Thomas Kuhn's analysis of paradigm shifts demonstrated that scientific revolutions restructure the interpretive frameworks through which anomalies are assessed (17). Although Kuhn focused on scientific communities, his broader insight that knowledge operates within shifting paradigms suggests that metaphysical plausibility may also be historically contingent.

Michel Foucault's concept of epistemic regimes further supports this interpretation (12). According to Foucault, each historical epoch operates under underlying structures that determine what can meaningfully be said, thought, or legitimized. If contemporary epistemic regimes are increasingly shaped by data-driven validation, algorithmic modeling, and biological reductionism, then theological language must operate within a transformed discursive field.

Parallel discussions have emerged in cognitive science and evolutionary psychology. Scholars such as Pascal Boyer have argued that religious concepts may arise from cognitive tendencies embedded in human psychology (18). Others have suggested that belief systems function as adaptive social mechanisms rather than ontological claims (19). While such accounts attempt to naturalize religion, they often risk reducing metaphysical frameworks to evolutionary by-products.

In the domain of artificial intelligence and technological modernity, Yuval Noah Harari has argued that data-driven systems increasingly challenge traditional religious narratives by offering alternative structures of meaning grounded in algorithmic authority (20). Although Harari's work is controversial, it highlights the tension between theological anthropology and computational models of human identity.

Neuroscientific research has also contributed to the reconfiguration of metaphysical debates. Studies correlating religious experience with neural activity have prompted discussions regarding the biological mediation of transcendence (21). While such findings do not disprove metaphysical claims, they alter the explanatory landscape in which those claims are situated.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Despite extensive scholarship on secularization, modernization, and post-secular dynamics, a critical analytical gap persists. Most existing frameworks interpret the contemporary religious landscape through sociological indicators declining institutional participation, privatization of belief, or political reconfiguration of religious authority (13–16). While such analyses remain valuable, they may not sufficiently capture the deeper structural shifts occurring at the epistemic level. The prevailing public narrative frequently frames the rise of non-religiosity as evidence of expanding atheism. Statistical surveys measuring self-identified atheists, agnostics, or "religiously unaffiliated" populations are often interpreted as indicators of ideological rejection (22). However, such measurements do not necessarily reveal the underlying cognitive transformations shaping plausibility structures.

The central problem addressed in this paper is therefore conceptual rather than demographic.

It can be formulated as follows:

Is the contemporary rise in non-religiosity primarily the result of ideological disbelief, or does it reflect a structural incompatibility between inherited theological metaphysics and an accelerated epistemic environment shaped by modern science and artificial intelligence?

This distinction is crucial. If disbelief is primarily ideological, then it can be debated at the level of argumentation apologetics versus atheistic critique. However, if the shift is structural, then the issue concerns the evolving conditions under which metaphysical claims are evaluated.

The hypothesis advanced here does not assume that religion is disappearing, nor that metaphysical inquiry lacks validity. Rather, it suggests that explanatory expectations have undergone recalibration. In an intellectual environment increasingly defined by mechanistic modeling, biological intervention, and computational simulation, theological language may encounter new forms of interpretive friction.

Historically, belief systems have often declined in epistemic authority not because they were decisively refuted, but because alternative frameworks rendered them explanatorily redundant. The gradual displacement of humoral theory in medicine or geocentrism in cosmology illustrates how paradigms lose centrality when competing models demonstrate greater predictive power (17). The question, therefore, is whether a similar dynamic may be affecting theological metaphysics.

This paper proposes that the current intellectual moment differs from earlier secularization phases in at least three respects:

1. Acceleration of knowledge production Scientific paradigms are no longer shifting gradually over centuries but evolving rapidly across decades (23).

2. Direct intervention in biological structures Gene-editing technologies challenge classical notions of divine determinism and fixed human nature (8).

3. Algorithmic cognition Artificial intelligence operates as a cognitive multiplier, transforming how reasoning, creativity, and even authorship are conceptualized (9, 20).

Under these conditions, metaphysical constructs such as immaterial soul, angelic agency, divine providence, and transcendental cosmology are increasingly interpreted within explanatory frameworks that demand operational coherence. The tension may not be explicitly theological; rather, it manifests through shifting standards of plausibility.

Thus, the core problem of this research is epistemic compatibility.

More precisely:

- Are traditional theological constructs structurally adaptable to accelerated scientific paradigms?
- Or are they experiencing a gradual loss of relatability under contemporary explanatory expectations?

It is important to clarify what this study does not claim. It does not assert that religious belief is irrational. It does not argue that metaphysical realities do not exist. Nor does it propose that science has conclusively replaced transcendence. Instead, it investigates whether the cognitive environment in which belief operates has undergone transformation significant enough to alter how metaphysical language is received.

The concept of "relatability" is central here. By relatability, this paper refers to the degree to which a conceptual framework aligns with dominant explanatory modes within a given epistemic regime (12). When explanatory expectations shift, the intuitive resonance of inherited concepts may shift with them.

To address this problem, the following research questions guide the analysis:

Primary Research Question

1. Does the rise of non-religiosity reflect ideological atheism, or does it indicate a structural transformation in epistemic compatibility between theology and accelerated scientific cognition?

Secondary Research Questions

2. How did the Scientific Revolution initiate the decoupling of metaphysical authority from empirical explanation?

3. In what ways does contemporary cognitive acceleration differ from earlier phases of secularization?

4. How do developments in neuroscience, genetics, and artificial intelligence reshape plausibility structures surrounding theological concepts?

5. Can the current moment be understood as an extension of Weberian disenchantment, or does it represent a qualitatively new epistemic phase?

By situating these questions within historical, philosophical, and interdisciplinary analysis, the paper seeks to move beyond simplistic narratives of belief versus disbelief. The objective is diagnostic clarity: to understand whether the intellectual trajectory initiated in early modernity is now entering an accelerated phase that challenges not merely religious institutions, but the metaphysical grammar of inherited belief systems.

Methodology

The present study adopts a theoretical and interdisciplinary methodology designed to analyze structural transformations in epistemic frameworks rather than to measure demographic religious trends. Because the central concern of this paper is conceptual compatibility rather than statistical decline, the methodological approach prioritizes historical analysis, epistemic critique, and cross-disciplinary synthesis.

Historical-Analytical Approach

First, the study employs a historical-analytical method to trace the trajectory of intellectual transformation from the Scientific Revolution to the present. Rather than treating modernity as a monolithic event, the analysis considers it as a multi-phase process involving the gradual decoupling of theological authority from empirical explanation (1, 4).

This historical dimension allows the study to situate contemporary developments within a long arc of epistemic restructuring. By examining earlier paradigm transitions such as the displacement of geocentrism, humoral medicine, and animistic cosmologies the paper identifies patterns through which explanatory frameworks lose centrality when alternative models demonstrate superior predictive or operational coherence (17).

The purpose of this historical layer is not to equate theology with obsolete paradigms, but to identify structural similarities in how epistemic authority shifts across epochs.

Conceptual and Epistemic Analysis

Second, the study employs conceptual analysis to clarify key terms such as:

- Secularization
- Disenchantment
- Cognitive acceleration
- Metaphysical plausibility
- Relatability

Drawing upon Weber's rationalization thesis (4) and Foucault's notion of epistemic regimes (12), the analysis examines how dominant explanatory standards shape the intelligibility of knowledge claims. The concept of "relatability" is operationalized not as emotional acceptance but as structural alignment between metaphysical propositions and prevailing evaluative criteria within an epistemic environment.This approach shifts the discussion from belief as psychological commitment to belief as conceptual coherence within historically contingent knowledge systems.

Interdisciplinary Synthesis

The study further integrates insights from three major domains:

1. Neuroscience — examining how neural correlates of cognition reframe classical metaphysical discussions surrounding consciousness and soul (7, 21).

2. Genetics and biotechnology — analyzing how gene-editing technologies challenge fixed anthropological assumptions embedded in certain theological frameworks (8).

3. Artificial Intelligence studies — assessing AI as a cognitive multiplier that accelerates reasoning, modeling, and knowledge production (9, 20).

Rather than conducting empirical experiments within these fields, the paper synthesizes their theoretical implications for metaphysical discourse. The goal is to assess how these scientific domains reshape the plausibility structures within which theological concepts operate.

Comparative Epistemology

A comparative epistemological framework is also employed. This involves examining how explanatory systems function across different historical contexts and identifying the conditions under which certain frameworks maintain or lose legitimacy. The study does not assume that empirical explanation and metaphysical reasoning are mutually exclusive. Instead, it investigates whether accelerated empirical paradigms alter the balance between symbolic-mythic cognition and mechanistic-computational cognition. By comparing pre-modern enchanted cosmologies, Enlightenment rationality, and contemporary algorithmic cognition, the paper seeks to determine whether the present moment represents continuity with earlier secularization processes or a qualitatively new epistemic phase.

Scope and Limitations

This study is theoretical and diagnostic in scope. It does not attempt to provide:

- Quantitative measurements of religious decline
- Normative theological reform proposals
- Empirical validation of metaphysical claims

Its purpose is analytical: to assess whether contemporary intellectual acceleration produces structural tension between inherited theological metaphysics and emerging explanatory paradigms.

The paper acknowledges that religion persists globally in diverse forms (15). It does not claim universal decline. Instead, it focuses on the epistemic environment within which intellectual elites, scientific communities, and technologically advanced societies evaluate metaphysical claims.

Analytical Framework Summary

In summary, the methodology integrates:

- Historical trajectory analysis
- Conceptual clarification
- Epistemic regime theory
- Interdisciplinary synthesis
- Comparative plausibility assessment

This framework enables the study to move beyond sociological secularization metrics and toward a structural examination of epistemic compatibility under conditions of cognitive acceleration.

Main Analysis / Theoretical Discussion

Historical Differentiation and the Narrowing of Metaphysical Authority

The historical trajectory outlined earlier demonstrates that theology did not disappear under modernity; rather, its explanatory jurisdiction progressively narrowed. The Scientific Revolution displaced it from cosmology (25), Darwinian evolution reframed biological teleology (26), and sociological and psychological models naturalized religious phenomena (27, 28).

However, what is significant is not the loss of belief but the redistribution of explanatory authority. Each epistemic shift reduced the domains in which divine agency functioned as the primary explanatory mechanism. God was no longer required to explain planetary motion, disease causation, or species variation. Theological frameworks survived, but increasingly in existential, symbolic, or moral registers.

This narrowing was gradual. It unfolded across centuries. Importantly, it did not produce universal atheism. Instead, it created differentiated spheres: science explained mechanism; religion provided meaning.The present question is whether this differentiation has entered a new phase.

Cognitive Acceleration as Structural Force

The twenty-first century differs from earlier phases of secularization in one decisive respect: acceleration. Knowledge production no longer unfolds at the tempo of generational turnover; it operates at computational speed. Artificial intelligence functions not merely as a tool, but as a multiplier of pattern recognition, simulation, and synthesis (9, 20). Machine learning systems process datasets beyond human cognitive limits, generating predictive models that increasingly inform medicine, economics, governance, and creativity.

Simultaneously, neuroscience continues to map cognitive functions onto neural architectures (7). Functional imaging technologies have reframed discussions of consciousness, moral reasoning, and religious experience by identifying neural correlates associated with such states (21). While these findings do not invalidate metaphysical claims, they alter the explanatory environment within which those claims operate.

Genetic technologies further intensify this transformation. CRISPR-based gene editing introduces the capacity to modify biological inheritance at the molecular level (8). Human beings are no longer solely interpreting life; they are intervening in its structure.

Acceleration, therefore, is not merely temporal. It is epistemic. It compresses explanatory cycles and raises expectations for operational coherence.

From Secularization to Epistemic Incompatibility

Classical secularization theory emphasized institutional decline (13–15). However, contemporary dynamics suggest a subtler transformation: the increasing friction between metaphysical constructs and dominant explanatory paradigms. When explanatory authority is grounded in computational modeling, probabilistic prediction, and biological mechanism, theological language encounters a shift in evaluative criteria. The issue is not necessarily refutation but alignment. For example, traditional doctrines of immaterial soul confront neuroscientific accounts that correlate cognitive functions with brain processes (7). Theological notions of providence encounter stochastic and evolutionary models that emphasize contingency rather than teleological design (26). Concepts of divine intervention face an environment structured by closed causal systems.The friction emerges not through polemical debate but through plausibility recalibration. In this sense, the rise of non-religiosity may reflect structural incompatibility rather than ideological rejection.

The Relatability Crisis of Theological Metaphysics

The concept of "relatability" in this context refers to the degree to which metaphysical propositions align with dominant explanatory expectations within an epistemic regime (12). When explanatory standards prioritize empirical verifiability, algorithmic transparency, and mechanistic coherence, symbolic or transcendent language may appear increasingly distant from everyday cognitive frameworks. This does not imply that theological concepts lack philosophical depth. Rather, their intuitive resonance may diminish under altered cognitive conditions.

Historically, mythic and animistic cosmologies lost explanatory authority when mechanistic models demonstrated predictive superiority (11, 17). The present study suggests that a comparable shift may be occurring at the level of metaphysical grammar.

Theological constructs such as angels, immaterial soul, or transcendent cosmology are not necessarily being disproven. Instead, they are being repositioned within a cognitive environment shaped by biological reductionism and computational abstraction. The consequence is a gradual relocation of religion from explanatory centrality toward symbolic marginality in certain intellectual circles.

Acceleration and the Compression of Intellectual Evolution

Earlier secularization unfolded over centuries. The current phase unfolds within decades. AI systems capable of generating complex texts, solving mathematical problems, and simulating biological systems compress intellectual labor in unprecedented ways (9).

As cognitive tasks become algorithmically reproducible, the anthropological image of the human being shifts. Human uniqueness once anchored in rationality or divine image must now negotiate with artificial systems that replicate aspects of reasoning.

This compression intensifies epistemic expectations. If explanatory coherence must operate within computational logic, metaphysical frameworks may require reinterpretation to remain intelligible within that logic.

Diagnostic Synthesis

The evidence surveyed does not indicate that religion is disappearing globally. Rather, it suggests that certain metaphysical constructs are encountering structural friction within accelerated epistemic environments.

The central argument of this paper can therefore be restated:

What is often interpreted as the spread of atheism may instead reflect a transition from institutional secularization to epistemic incompatibility.

The shift is subtle but significant. It moves the debate from belief versus disbelief to compatibility versus misalignment within evolving cognitive regimes.

Conclusion

The historical trajectory from the Scientific Revolution to the present reveals a sustained transformation in the structure of knowledge. What began as a challenge to ecclesiastical authority evolved into a broader reorganization of epistemic legitimacy. Theology gradually lost its monopoly over cosmological, biological, and psychological explanation, not necessarily through refutation, but through differentiation. Science assumed explanatory jurisdiction over mechanism; religion increasingly relocated toward meaning, morality, and identity. However, the contemporary moment appears to extend this trajectory beyond institutional secularization.

The twenty-first century is characterized not merely by modernization but by cognitive acceleration. Advances in neuroscience, molecular genetics, and artificial intelligence have intensified the speed and scope of knowledge production. Explanatory standards now operate within computational, probabilistic, and biologically interventionist paradigms that were inconceivable in earlier phases of modernity.

Within this accelerated epistemic environment, the rise of non-religiosity may be misinterpreted if framed solely as ideological atheism. The analysis presented in this paper suggests an alternative diagnosis: what appears as disbelief may instead reflect a structural transformation in the conditions under which metaphysical claims are evaluated. The tension lies not simply in belief versus skepticism, but in the alignment or misalignment between inherited theological grammar and dominant explanatory frameworks. The concept of a “relatability crisis” captures this structural tension. When explanatory authority increasingly privileges mechanistic coherence, algorithmic modeling, and empirical validation, symbolic or transcendent constructs encounter altered plausibility conditions. This does not entail the falsification of metaphysical claims, nor does it predict the disappearance of religion. Rather, it indicates that the epistemic terrain upon which religious language operates has shifted.

Importantly, this study does not assert that secularization is irreversible or universal. Religious traditions have historically demonstrated adaptive capacity. Nor does it claim that science has exhausted metaphysical inquiry. Instead, it argues that contemporary intellectual acceleration has introduced a new phase in the long arc of epistemic differentiation one in which the compatibility between theological metaphysics and accelerated scientific paradigms warrants renewed examination.

Future research may explore whether theological frameworks can be reformulated within contemporary epistemic regimes, or whether emerging forms of spirituality will arise that integrate computational and biological paradigms more seamlessly. The present analysis remains diagnostic rather than prescriptive. Its central contribution lies in reframing the discourse: the question is not merely whether belief is declining, but whether the cognitive environment in which belief operates has undergone structural recalibration.

In this sense, the rise of non-religiosity may represent less a triumph of atheism than a transition in epistemic architecture. The intellectual journey initiated in early modernity may now be entering an accelerated phase one in which metaphysical relatability becomes a central analytical concern for philosophy, sociology, and the study of religion.

References

1. Shapin, S. (1996). The Scientific Revolution. University of Chicago Press.
2. Descartes, R. (1998). Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy (D. A. Cress, Trans.). Hackett Publishing. (Original work published 1637)

3. Kant, I. (1996). An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment? In M. J. Gregor (Ed.), Practical Philosophy. Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1784)
4. Weber, M. (2002). The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (P. Baehr & G. C. Wells, Trans.). Penguin Books. (Original work published 1905)
5.Berger, P. L. (1967). The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion. Anchor Books.
6. Taylor, C. (2007). A Secular Age. Harvard University Press.
7. Gazzaniga, M. S., Ivry, R. B., & Mangun, G. R. (2019). Cognitive Neuroscience: The Biology of the Mind (5th ed.). W. W. Norton.
8. Doudna, J. A., & Sternberg, S. H. (2017). A Crack in Creation: Gene Editing and the Unthinkable Power to Control Evolution. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
9. Russell, S., & Norvig, P. (2021). Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach (4th ed.). Pearson.
10. Norris, P., & Inglehart, R. (2011). Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
11. Levack, B. P. (2016). The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe (4th ed.). Routledge.
12. Foucault, M. (1972). The Archaeology of Knowledge (A. M. Sheridan Smith, Trans.). Pantheon Books.
13. Bruce, S. (2011). Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory. Oxford University Press.
14. Berger, P. L. (1999). The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics. Eerdmans.
15. Casanova, J. (1994). Public Religions in the Modern World. University of Chicago Press.
16. Habermas, J. (2008). Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays. Polity Press.
17. Kuhn, T. S. (2012). The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (4th ed.). University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1962)
18. Boyer, P. (2001). Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought. Basic Books.
19. Atran, S. (2002). In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion. Oxford University Press.
20. Harari, Y. N. (2017). Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow. Harper.
21. Newberg, A., & d'Aquili, E. (2001). Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief. Ballantine Books.
22. Pew Research Center. (2015). The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050. Pew Research Center.
23. Kurzweil, R. (2005). The Singularity Is Near. Viking.
24. Grant, E. (1996). The Foundations of Modern Science in the Middle Ages. Cambridge University Press.
25. Copernicus, N. (1992). On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres (E. Rosen, Trans.). Johns Hopkins University Press. (Original work published 1543)
26. Darwin, C. (2009). On the Origin of Species. Penguin Classics. (Original work published 1859)
27. Freud, S. (1961). The Future of an Illusion. W. W. Norton. (Original work published 1927)
28. Durkheim, E. (1995). The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (K. E. Fields, Trans.). Free Press. (Original work published 1912)
29. Floridi, L. (2014). The Fourth Revolution: How the Infosphere Is Reshaping Human Reality. Oxford University Press.