

Mass Hysteria and Religious Phenomena: A Psycho-Philosophical and AI-Driven Exploration

Shubham K. Dominic

Introduction

Throughout history, humans have sought spiritual experiences to find meaning, solace, or answers to life's complexities. In religious settings, particularly in charismatic gatherings, phenomena such as people falling to the ground, rolling over, or convulsing after being touched or waved at by religious figures have been reported across many traditions. While believers may interpret these occurrences as signs of divine intervention, the underlying reasons behind these phenomena could be deeply rooted in psychological, neurological, and social factors. In this article, we aim to explore these events from a psycho-philosophical perspective, employing insights from both psychology and artificial intelligence (AI) to uncover what truly happens during these moments.

Mass Hysteria and Group Suggestibility

The phenomenon often described as “mass hysteria” or “mass psychogenic illness” refers to collective emotional or physical reactions without a clear medical cause. In the context of religious settings, the collective environment is often highly charged—there is intense emotional stimulation, rhythmic music, or chants, and strong expectations of experiencing something transcendent. When people see others in the group collapsing or displaying strange behaviors, it creates a feedback loop of mimicry and heightened suggestibility.

Mass hysteria is closely related to the concept of groupthink, where individuals in a group are more likely to conform to the collective behavior, even if it defies logic. In religious settings, where the atmosphere is filled with reverence and anticipation, people are likely to experience heightened suggestibility, which triggers psychosomatic responses such as fainting, dizziness, or even convulsions. The anticipation of a miraculous event can deeply affect the mind and body, creating real physical responses.

The Role of Neurobiology and Biochemistry

When we examine these religious phenomena through a neurological lens, we realize that intense spiritual experiences can activate the brain's emotional centers. Research suggests that religious experiences stimulate areas of the brain such as the limbic system, which is responsible for emotional regulation, and the prefrontal cortex, associated with decision-making and self-awareness. In some cases, this could result in an altered state of consciousness where people feel detached from reality, leading them to exhibit unusual physical behaviors, such as falling or convulsing.

Biochemically, emotions are driven by a range of hormones and neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin, and adrenaline. When someone is caught up in the fervor of a religious ceremony, the heightened emotional state can trigger a flood of these chemicals, leading to symptoms such as lightheadedness, hyperventilation, or loss of muscle control. Thus, these physical reactions may not be evidence of divine intervention, but rather the result of a body overwhelmed by its own biochemical processes in response to intense emotional stimuli.

AI and the Study of Mass Hysteria

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a powerful tool for analyzing patterns in human behavior, including psychological phenomena like mass hysteria. AI models can process vast amounts of data from various case studies, identifying common factors in mass hysteria events across different cultures and religious contexts. By analyzing speech patterns, body language, and even brain wave activity during religious ceremonies, AI can detect patterns that human observers might overlook.

For instance, AI can help reveal the extent to which group behavior and suggestibility play a role in these events. It can analyze the speech of religious leaders during these events, finding common phrases or techniques that might trigger collective emotional responses. Additionally, AI-driven analysis of facial expressions or body movements can determine whether the reactions are spontaneous or if they follow a predictable pattern based on the environment or stimuli.

Psychological and Philosophical Reflection

From a philosophical standpoint, we must ask whether these phenomena are genuine experiences of spiritual transcendence or performative acts deeply rooted in human psychology. Philosophers such as Immanuel Kant have argued that our perception of reality is mediated by the mind, meaning that what we experience is shaped by our expectations, beliefs, and emotions. In the case of religious phenomena, it could be that the mind, under the influence of strong expectations and communal reinforcement, constructs a reality where falling down or convulsing feels like a spiritual experience.

However, when we critically assess these experiences, certain questions arise. Despite the overwhelming emotional reactions people exhibit in religious settings, there are no verifiable physical miracles such as a limb regrowing or an incurable disease suddenly disappearing. The fact that no such tangible, permanent changes occur raises doubts about the authenticity of these experiences as evidence of supernatural power. If these events were truly miraculous, we would expect to see phenomena that defy the laws of nature in undeniable ways. Instead, what we often witness are temporary emotional responses that fade as quickly as they arise.

Conclusion: The Psychological Reality Behind the Phenomenon

In conclusion, while religious experiences are deeply meaningful to those who partake in them, the physical reactions people exhibit during these ceremonies—falling, rolling,

convulsing—are likely rooted in psychological and neurological processes rather than divine intervention. AI analysis can help us better understand the triggers and mechanisms behind mass hysteria, showing that these events are the product of social suggestion, emotional manipulation, and biochemical reactions rather than supernatural forces.

Given that no verifiable physical miracles occur, and the reactions are temporary and confined to the emotional state of the moment, we must critically reflect on the purpose and ethics of such practices. If these experiences are driven primarily by suggestion and emotional manipulation, there is a strong case to be made that they should be condemned as spectacles rather than genuine spiritual encounters.

Ultimately, understanding the psychological and neurological basis of these experiences helps us navigate the fine line between faith and manipulation, providing a framework for separating authentic spiritual experiences from those that exploit the suggestibility of believers.

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