

# AI Psychosis and the Legal Profession: Ethical Fault Lines

By Daniel A. Cotter

Recent reporting highlights a striking example of what some call “AI psychosis”: an individual who, after extensive interaction with generative AI, became convinced he had discovered a new form of mathematics, an insight reinforced and elaborated upon by the AI system itself. Whether framed as overreliance, delusional amplification, or simply misplaced trust, the episode underscores a core risk: AI can validate and deepen false beliefs with persuasive fluency. AI has been referred to as a “sycophant” and a “user pleaser.”

The concern is not merely theoretical. Commentators, and even novelists such as Michael Connelly, have explored how AI systems, designed to be responsive and engaging, may inadvertently create feedback loops that blur the line between

assistance and affirmation. Cases alleging product defects and suicides resulting from feedback loops have emerged.

For legal professionals, that dynamic raises immediate ethical implications. Clients may increasingly arrive with AI-generated “theories” about their case, held with unwarranted certainty. Under Rule 2.1, lawyers must exercise independent judgment and render candid advice, which may include disentangling fact from AI-fueled fiction. In more extreme instances, Rule 1.14’s guidance on diminished capacity may come into play if reliance on AI reflects impaired decision-making.

Lawyers themselves are not immune. Rule 1.1’s duty of competence now extends to understanding AI’s limitations, including its tendency to hallucinate or reinforce user bias. Courts have

already sanctioned attorneys for submitting AI-fabricated authorities; the next frontier may involve more subtle cognitive distortions.

The lesson is straightforward but urgent: AI is not just a tool of efficiency—it is a potential influence on belief. Ethical lawyering in the AI era requires vigilance not only over outputs, but over how those outputs shape human judgment. ■



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