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Affective Instability and Paranoia

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The phenomenon of affective instability is not well understood yet but is experienced widely in some of its manifestations. According to recent empirical studies, it has an important role to play in the genesis of a variety of psychiatric disorders. In this paper, we want to focus on the role of affective instability in paranoia. Paranoia is characterised by having unjustified beliefs about being threatened by malevolent others and thus is linked to persecutory delusions. Causal accounts of paranoia tend to focus on how perceptual processes might be disrupted and cognitive processes might be biased, causing people to accept unjustified beliefs about being under threat. In this paper we argue that tracking affective instability helps us tell a fuller story, where disturbances of mood are a mediating factor between trauma and paranoia, leading people to experience the world and themselves as unpredictable.