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Exploration of Everydayness in Schizophrenia: A Phenomenological Approach

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1 **For an exploration of everydayness in schizophrenia:**
2 **a phenomenological approach**

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11 **Short Title:** For an exploration of everydayness in schizophrenia
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23 **Keywords:** schizophrenia; phenomenology; subjective experiences; everydayness; narrative
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25 **Abstract**

26 This article explores everydayness as a specific form of experience of the world and its
27 alterations in schizophrenia. In the field of phenomenological psychopathology, the
28 transformations of subjective experience in schizophrenia have been the subject of a great
29 deal of work, but the relationship between these alterations of subjective experience and the
30 experience of the everyday remains largely unexplored. A phenomenological point of view
31 leads us to explore everydayness as a constitutive framework of experience, one that may be
32 impeded in schizophrenia. The question of the everyday allows us to bridge the gap between
33 the descriptions of subjective experience proposed by phenomenological psychopathology
34 and what is at stake in therapeutic treatment. It seems to us that the work of constructing an
35 individual narrative of the everyday may be a useful psychotherapeutic approach for helping
36 patients rebuild the framework of everydayness.
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40 **Introduction**
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42 The notion of the everyday very often bears a negative connotation, as being
43 insignificant and trivial. This is perhaps the reason that it has been explored very little not
44 only in the history of philosophy and social sciences, but also in psychopathology and
45 psychiatry. However, it is in terms of its repercussions on the daily life of a person that a
46 pathology is considered to be disabling. The assessment of quality of life, psychosocial
47 rehabilitation, and recovery, which are the subject of a great deal of work, place the patient's
48 ability to find autonomy in a daily framework at the heart of mental health care today [1, 2].
49 What is often at issue in schizophrenia in particular is the difficulty of re-establishing a

50 rhythm and automaticity in activities that act as a daily framework and reintegrate the subject
51 into an intersubjective temporality [3].

52 The everyday has recently gained renewed interest in phenomenology, thanks in
53 particular to the work of French philosopher Bruce Bégout [4]. Bégout questions the
54 subjective constitution of the everyday using the notion of “everydaying” (*quotidianisation*),
55 defined as the process that transforms being in the world into a familiar and ordinary
56 experience. Everydayness (*la quotidienneté*), according to Bégout, appears as a pre-reflective
57 framework of experience, one that should therefore not be confused with the norms of social
58 adaptation and the empirical organization of the everyday (*le quotidien*) in each society. This
59 empirical organization concerns the way in which everyday life is organized in a society: for
60 example, the rules of socialization, the functioning of the family unit, the organization of
61 work time, or feasting practices.

62 What then does a phenomenological understanding of everydayness contribute to
63 psychopathology, and in particular to an understanding of schizophrenia? The question of the
64 everyday has been raised in the social sciences, especially in research done by Bourdieu [5],
65 De Certeau [6], and Berger et Luckmann [7]. Using Schütz's work, Berger and Luckmann
66 have traced connections between the social sciences and the phenomenological perspective. In
67 the field of phenomenological psychiatry, it is Blankenburg, who, also drawing inspiration
68 from Schütz, has most worked on the everyday in connection with the notion of common
69 sense, in what he calls the loss of natural self-evidence in schizophrenia [8]. In order to
70 conceive of the everyday, Blankenburg relies on Husserl's notion of lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*)
71 [9]. This is in contrast to Binswanger who, for his part, approaches the everyday via
72 Heidegger's "They" in his analysis of distortion, presumption and mannerism [10].

73 More recently, the EASE [11] and EAWE [12] scales have proposed a detailed
74 exploration of some alterations in the experience of self and world in schizophrenia in
75 connection with the hypothesis that there has been a disturbance of the pre-reflexive minimal
76 self. However, the specific relationship between everydayness and these alterations of the
77 constitution of experience in schizophrenia has not yet received focused attention. This is
78 what we propose to explore by identifying the different phenomenological dimensions of
79 everydayness. The subjective experiences of schizophrenia seem to us to demonstrate an
80 impairment of everydayness as a constitutive framework of experience.

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1. A phenomenological perspective: from the everyday to everydaying

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If everyday life is generally seldom questioned, it is because it possesses a specific phenomenological quality: it manifests itself as that which goes without saying and which remains implicit. It would thus concern the register of the self-evident and the pre-given, which Husserl develops with his notion of lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) [9]. Constituted through passive syntheses, the lifeworld results from the sedimentation of perceptions and actions into habits. Through a pre-intentional process of synthesis and typification, these lived experiences are transformed into typical patterns of perception and action. These patterns then become an a priori framework for anticipation, a pre-given horizon for any new experience. These passive syntheses are thus what is behind the feeling of familiarity, so that an object, even a new one, already appears to the subject as having the form of something known [13]. The constitution of the everyday can thus be related to this structure of the lifeworld: insofar as it is made up of this sedimentation of habits, the everyday forms an implicit background for every new experience.

More specifically, Bégout [4] questions the conditions of the constitution of the everyday. To this end, he distinguishes between everydayness (*la quotidienneté*) as a

100 constitutive framework of subjective experience, and the everyday (*le quotidien*), which
101 concerns the empirical organization that everyday life can take on according to different
102 cultures and subjects. Everydayness does not refer to objects or activities, but rather to a way
103 of appearing, or to a specific form of presence in the world. It is what gives an experience a
104 familiar and self-evident character, and in this sense, it forms a structure of pre-reflexive
105 anticipation.

106 Unlike Heidegger, who considers the everyday to be a form of inauthentic existence in
107 the discourse of the “They”, [14] Bégout relates everydayness to Dasein's need to maintain
108 itself in its being, which requires a stabilization and continuity of experience. The constitution
109 of the everyday is thus a process of "domesticating" experience, which replaces the unknown
110 and the indeterminacy of transcendence with the security of a delimited, predictable and
111 familiar world: “in the everyday world, the everyday covers the world” [4, p. 170]. Bégout
112 proposes to name this process everydaying (*quotidianisation*) or everydaying force (*force*
113 *quotidianisante*). This framework of everydayness (*quotidienneté*) appears as both constituted
114 and constitutive: constituted by the sedimentation of past experiences, it is also constitutive
115 because it configures every new experience as being already familiar.

116 Through everydayness, the subject makes use of the world in the mode of practical
117 habits and common sense, as a set of typical and pragmatic patterns of knowledge that
118 constitute shared evidences – what Straus called the axioms of everyday life [15]. According
119 to the analyses of Blankenburg [16] and Berger and Luckmann [7], everydayness appears to
120 be closely linked to the constitution of common sense. The latter could be thought of as the
121 result of a sedimentation of everydayness within the historical and cultural world. Serving as
122 a framework for the practical understanding of experience, common sense would thus form a
123 bridge between the pre-reflexive dimension of everyday life and the social world of an
124 individual [17].

125 Bégout's hypothesis is that this force of everydaying conceals its constituted character:
126 the power of the normative value and self-evident character of the everyday comes from the
127 fact that it is experienced by the subject as pre-given, natural, and unchanging, whereas it is in
128 fact the result of an ever-precarious process of domestication. Even though they are
129 constituted by passive syntheses, the axioms of everyday life and natural self-evidences are
130 manifest in experience as going without saying. The everyday is the source of the natural
131 attitude, which suspends any doubt about reality. This natural attitude makes us forget that in
132 the originary experience, the transcendence of the world manifests itself with strangeness and
133 unpredictability. Bégout therefore understands this pre-given character as being the result of
134 an invisible magic trick, by which the process of constitution conceals itself.

135 This hypothesis has important implications for psychopathology. This process of
136 passive and pre-reflective constitution of the everyday is fragile: familiarization is always
137 likely to give way to the strangeness and indeterminacy of the world. Can this hypothesis help
138 us to understand how these natural self-evidences can be lost in psychopathology, as well as
139 how the patient can try to reconstitute them? Can it be said that schizophrenia is characterized
140 by a specific disturbance of this process of everydaying?

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143 **2. An analysis of some dimensions of everydayness**

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146 In an effort to investigate the contributions of a phenomenology of everydayness to
147 psychopathology, we have attempted to distinguish several dimensions of this everydayness
148 on the basis of Bégout's work [18, 19]. These dimensions can serve as a guide in the clinical
exploration of a patient's difficulties with the everyday, and, more specifically, allow us to

149 examine the functions of this framework of everydayness. Let us then examine four main
150 dimensions of the constitution of this everydayness:

151 1/ The dimension of repetition: the everyday corresponds to a specific experience of lived
152 time made possible by the repetition, regularity, and rhythmicity of the activities and events
153 that make up daily existence. Made up of routines, rituals and habits, everydayness would
154 make it possible to establish recurring patterns of anticipation by means of repetition. In its
155 pre-reflexive, constitutive function, this dimension corresponds to the sedimentation at work
156 in passive synthesis.

157 2/ The dimension of implicit normativity associated with a tacit sense of belonging or of
158 community: the everyday is that by which an individual grounds himself in a lifeworld and in
159 shared norms and values. In this way, everydayness would be constitutive of a specific form
160 of intersubjectivity, which can be related to Heidegger's notion of readiness-to-hand [14]: an
161 object always has a background of meanings, uses and values that are tacitly shared in a
162 community. The function of the everyday is to guarantee these shared uses and affordances.

163 3/ The dimension of plasticity or adjustment: the very nature of the everyday is to constitute a
164 framework that must remain at once flexible and constantly adjustable. The everyday is above
165 all the framework for practical activities, and must constantly adapt to the emergence of the
166 unexpected. Through this dimension of plasticity, everydayness would make it possible to
167 domesticate what Maldiney calls transpassibility and transpossibility [20], i.e., the openness
168 to a transcendence of experience that always goes beyond possibilities defined a priori. The
169 flexible framework of the everyday, undergirded by the interplay of transpassibility and
170 transpossibility, is that by which the event can be received in a familiar space: the unexpected
171 is assimilated by the already known.

172 4/ The dimension of neutrality: the everyday is par excellence that which is not an event.
173 Through its familiar routine, it transforms what makes for an event into a neutral element that
174 is no longer salient for the subject, that does not require focused attention and does not
175 involve decisive existential choices. Everydayness constitutes a background of neutrality on
176 which events can stand out, forming a horizon of anticipation for the attribution of
177 motivational salience.

178 These dimensions help to identify everydayness more precisely in its constitutive
179 function as a framework of experience. Everydayness makes the constitution of a distinctive
180 form of subjective experience possible by constituting a specific domestication of temporality,
181 intersubjectivity and transpossibility. This work of domestication allows daily life to be given
182 to the subject as a delimited, reliable, and reassuring sphere of experience.

183 We can then say with Bégout that the process of everydaying lies in an ever-fragile
184 balance between two poles. At one end of the spectrum lies immobilization, the pure
185 determination of the return of the same, and a stereotyped framework, and at the other,
186 transcendence, the pure indeterminacy of the event, and novelty. In other words, everydayness
187 is a dialectical process between these two poles that must constantly find an intermediary
188 between a withdrawal into the all-too-familiar – which would remove from life all openness
189 to the unknown and to possibility – and a pure openness to the foreign and to transcendence –
190 which would prevent the constitution of both stable points of reference and a familiar rhythm.
191 The everyday must be able to constitute itself as a repetitive and neutral framework, while at
192 the same time establishing a relationship with the event, the unknown, and the indeterminate.

193 The alterations of the everyday that are encountered in psychopathology can then be
194 considered as disturbances of this dialectic of everydayness, where everydayness would fail to
195 constitute this intermediate and reassuring space between the two poles. The alterations of
196 experience that occur in schizophrenia can be traced back to these four dimensions of
197 everydayness.

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3. Impairments of everydayness in schizophrenia

In his discussion of the case of Anne, a patient who coined the term "natural self-evidence", Blankenburg highlights the difficulty in schizophrenia of constituting a daily framework as well as the close link between natural self-evidences and everydayness: "She always wanted answers to 'questions', for example, questions about becoming an adult, about the nature of her troubles, but also about how to find one's way around the most common notions and small evidences of everyday life" [8, p.74].¹ Without the pre-given framework of everydayness, the relationship to the world rests solely on the empirical ego without any transcendental foundation. This is what gives rise to the experience of perplexity and exhaustion that Blankenburg calls transcendental asthenia.

Nevertheless, the relationship between the alterations of subjective experience in schizophrenia, as described by phenomenological psychopathology, and everydayness has not yet been sufficiently explored. If there is a disturbance of the minimal self and of the pre-reflective conditions of experience [11,12], this disturbance must have consequences for the shaping of the framework of everydayness, which is at once constituted and constitutive. We can thus hypothesize that the constitutive dimension of everydayness is affected in schizophrenia. Thus, everydayness cannot operate as a dialectic that creates an intermediate space between the pole of pure determination of the same and the pole of pure transcendence of the unexpected. It seems that the alterations of experience typical of schizophrenia can be linked to these two extreme poles. They thus reveal the failure of both this intermediate sphere and the dialectic of the familiar and the unknown proper to everyday life. These two extreme poles can be traced back to the different dimensions we have identified.

The dimension of repetition through which everydayness constitutes a specific experience of lived time seems unable to be constituted in schizophrenia. It is instead replaced either by an experience of time lived as automatic, stereotyped, and reified, or, at the opposite extreme, by an experience of pure and ceaseless novelty, in which nothing can be inscribed in a repetition [21], or else by a pure succession of moments without continuity [22]. Here, repetition cannot play its role of sedimenting past experiences, which would make it possible to constitute a horizon for anticipating new experiences. This failure of repetition can be linked to neurocognitive explorations of alterations of the latent inhibition mechanism in schizophrenia, a mechanism whereby a repeated experience loses its status of novelty [23]. Instead, time fails to constitute itself as everyday in schizophrenia, i.e. as an intermediate rhythm between stereotyped time and a succession of novelties.

Jaspers cites several first-person descriptions that testify to this lack of sedimentation into a habit, something which is usually achieved via the world of the everyday: "All objects appear so new and startling, I say their names over to myself and touch them several times to convince myself they are real." [24, p.63]; "Everything looked different – I saw in everything the touch of a divine magnificence. It was as if I had come into a new world, a new existence" [24, p.63]. Anne, Blankenburg's patient, also reported: "Each day I have to start anew, entirely anew!" [8, p.139].

An examination of the experiences reported by phenomenological psychiatry would seem to indicate that the dimension of normativity and sense of community associated with everydayness is also lacking in schizophrenia. At one extreme, it seems to be reduced to mimesis, which marks a lack of differentiation between self and other associated with the frequent experiences of transitivity reported by patients. At the opposite extreme, we find experiences that demonstrate a loss of any implicit anchoring in an intersubjective horizon,

¹ [Our translation]

247 such as is made possible by everydayness. These include not only experiences of distortion
248 [10], the loss of affordances [25], and solipsism [26], but also the position of exception that
249 characterizes many psychotic delusions – this can be, for example, a position of divinity, of
250 messiah, of genius, or of a victim persecuted by everyone else. This position of exception
251 points to a position of pure transcendence that cannot be everydayed.

252 The French psychiatrist Henri Grivois, known for his work on early-onset
253 schizophrenia, reports patient testimony that demonstrates both an experience of confusion
254 with others and a position of exception in a single individual. He proposes to use the term
255 “centrality” for this experience where a person feels they are at once in immediate and
256 mimetic communication with those around them and in a position of exception – since the
257 looks and gestures of everyone else converge onto them. The notion of centrality illustrates
258 well the coexistence, within a single experience, of two extreme poles – lack of differentiation
259 and exception – which are unable to enter into a dialectic through everydayness. "I am the
260 result of everyone. Created, not brought into the world by them, by people, but I reflect
261 myself on them. I am the mirror of Paris. Everyone is in me and I am in everyone. I feel like
262 I'm the only one and I don't like that feeling. The others are together and I'm on the outside"
263 [27, p. 153].²

264 The failure of this tacit sense of community is also consistent with what Laing has
265 designated as ontological insecurity in psychosis, which he defines as a loss of the sense of
266 reality and identity, both of oneself and of others [28]. According to Laing, this ontological
267 insecurity leads patients to oscillate between two extreme poles: that of a merging of their
268 identity with the identity of others, and that of a complete isolation by which the subject seeks
269 to protect himself from the threat of engulfment.

270 The dimension of plasticity and adjustment also seems to be affected in schizophrenia.
271 At one end of the spectrum, this impairment of this dimension can be linked to the morbid
272 rationalism described by Minkowski [29], in which the subject seeks to explain his or her
273 perceptions with causal chains that reduce any living dynamism to a material reification.
274 Morbid rationalism consists of a rigid application of formal rules in accordance with a logic
275 that leaves no room for the unexpected or the possible. At the other end of the spectrum, the
276 failure of the process of everydaying tends to result in what the EASE scale refers to as
277 experiences of existential reorientation [11]. Unable to constitute a sphere in which the
278 everyday can be domesticated, the subject is faced with a pure and indeterminate
279 transcendence, which very often leads either to projects of a mystical and metaphysical
280 nature, or to the refounding of language, science or humanity. This results from a
281 confrontation with a pure transpossibility that cannot take place in any horizon of anticipation
282 which might accommodate it within a framework that has already been established as
283 familiar. In his memoirs, Daniel Paul Schreber recounts the occurrence of such a pure event,
284 which takes on the global significance of a rupture in the history of humanity and in the
285 passage of time itself: "A fateful turn in the history of the earth and of mankind seemed to be
286 marked by the events of one single day distinctly preserved in my memory, on which there
287 was talk of the 'clocks of the world' running out and at the same time a continuous rich stream
288 of rays towards my body accompanied by light phenomena of great splendor" [30, p. 89].

289 Lastly, the neutral dimension of the everyday brings to mind numerous recent
290 neurocognitive works on the impairment of the attribution of motivational salience in
291 schizophrenia [31], as well as Gestalt-inspired works that highlight difficulties in structuring
292 perception according to a schema of figure and background [32]. Thus, in schizophrenia, there
293 would seem to be a disturbance in the constitution of a neutral and familiar background of

² [Our translation]

294 perception. Perception would then be subject to a reification that makes things appear in their
295 raw materiality, as though every experience were reduced to raw facts [11].

296 In Marie Sechehaye's well-known book, a patient named Renée reports her
297 experiences, giving the most evocative description of this phenomenon: "(...) suddenly 'the
298 thing' sprang up. The stone jar, decorated with blue flowers, was there facing me, defying me
299 with its presence, with its existence" [33, p.56]. At the other extreme, the absence of a
300 familiar background leaves the subject faced with an unassimilable transcendence, such as
301 Binswanger describes in the case of Suzanne Urban: "It is thus that the physiognomy of a
302 fundamentally familiar world, comfortable in spite of worries, changed into a foreign,
303 unusual, hostile physiognomy" [34, p.38]. Any element of perception is then likely to become
304 salient and significant, thereby giving rise to the feelings of meaning or apophenia [32]
305 characteristic of schizophrenic delusions. In the absence of a process of everydaying that
306 organizes a division between the familiar and the foreign, experience is either reified as a raw
307 fact, or constituted as pure events that no background of familiarity can assimilate and
308 contextualize. These two extreme poles at which perception is affected appear clearly in
309 domains 1 and 5 of the EAW scale: they include experiences of fragmentation of perception,
310 abnormal perceptual acuity, as well as both deanimation (where what is alive is perceived as
311 inanimate) and perceptual experiences that make inanimate objects appear to be alive and
312 meaningful. [12].

313 It can thus be assumed that the alterations of the pre-reflective conditions of
314 experience in schizophrenia impede the process of everydaying in its constitutive dimension,
315 which results in a failure to transform the experience of self and world into a ritualized,
316 familiar, and reassuring experience. It seems to us that describing the alterations of subjective
317 experience in schizophrenia as an impairment of everydayness allows us to better consider its
318 implications for the treatment of schizophrenia.

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321 **4. Psychotherapeutic implications and possibilities: everydayness and narrativity**

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323 By taking into account the specific experience of daily life, we are able to bridge the
324 gap between a phenomenological psychopathology, focused on the transformations of the
325 experience of the world, and a phenomenological psychotherapy that seeks to reweave the
326 fabric of an autonomous and everyday life. The dimensions of everydayness that we have
327 identified here can in fact be constituted as dimensions of a therapeutic work aimed at
328 restoring these different functions of the everyday with the patient.

329 It seems to us that one of the avenues opened up by these dimensions of everydayness
330 is the psychotherapeutic work of constructing an individual narrative of the everyday, in
331 connection with the phenomenological work on narrativity [35, 36] and narrative identity
332 [37]. Since everydayness lies on a pre-reflective level, this construction should not be limited
333 to the explicit content of the narrative. We can assume, based on research regarding the
334 implicit pre-narrative dimension of experience [38], that it is the organizing and structural
335 elements of the narrative that can allow access to the different pre-reflective functions of
336 everydayness.

337 The work of recounting allows time to be constituted in repetition thanks to the
338 rhythm of the account, which regularly calls upon the same elements while also introducing
339 variations. It introduces a dynamic within the repetition, while at the same time making it
340 possible to assimilate new events and make them familiar.

341 Constructing an individual narrative also makes it possible to work on the normative
342 and intersubjective dimension of the everyday, because it offers the possibility of playing on
343 different points of view regarding what is being recounted. For example, the account is likely

344 to involve characters with different points of view, and since it is addressed to an audience, it
345 invites its narrator to consider another point of view.

346 Recounting can also facilitate the recovery of the function of plasticity and adjustment
347 of the everyday because it makes it possible to imagine variations and alternatives [39]. It
348 requires a certain flexibility and cannot function with the rigid causal chains that one finds in
349 morbid rationalism. At the same time, the narrative framework provides a structure that
350 makes it possible to order events into a coherent architecture.

351 Working on narrativity also allows a hierarchy to be established between neutral and
352 salient elements, making it possible to work on the neutrality function of the everyday. The
353 way in which events are recounted makes it possible to distribute their salience differently and
354 in accordance to their place in the account and their relationship with the other elements of the
355 narrative. By linking it to a chain of events, the integration of an event into the account causes
356 it to lose its status of absolute transcendence, but it also makes it possible to place an
357 emphasis on a particular event by virtue of the importance it has played in the subject's
358 history.

359 It thus seems to us that everydayness, insofar as it is constitutive of experience, invites
360 us to take into consideration a particular form of narrativity, one that is specific to an account
361 of the everyday. Constructing an individual narrative of everyday life could serve as a
362 possible therapeutic mediation for helping the subject reconstruct the dialectic proper to
363 everydayness. Such a therapeutic approach leads us to better question the phenomenological
364 underpinnings of narrativity and its pre-reflective conditions [40, 41].

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367 **Conclusion**

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369 Taking into consideration a specific experience of the everyday allows us to bridge the
370 gap between research in the field of phenomenology and the objectives of patient care in
371 psychiatry. While attention has certainly been paid to the register of the everyday in
372 phenomenology in recent years, it seems to us that this register has not yet been sufficiently
373 explored.

374 We have proposed that there is therapeutic value in having patients recount their
375 everyday experiences. This raises the question of the link between the constitution of
376 everydayness and the shaping of experience made possible by narrativity, whose
377 phenomenological underpinnings constitute a rapidly growing field of research today.
378 Moreover, it seems to us that this narrativity of the everyday invites us to consider the social
379 and institutional context, which forms the daily world of the patient and the therapist as an
380 integral part of psychotherapy. The exploration of a specific dimension of everydayness in
381 psychotherapy can thus be situated in line with the consideration of the atmosphere of an
382 institution, as analyzed by Oury and Tosquelles in institutional psychotherapy [42]. In
383 contemporary research, this can lead to a deeper understanding of the links between
384 phenomenology and social psychiatry [43], as well as with other approaches such as Soteria
385 therapy [44].

386 Finally, a phenomenological understanding of everydayness as a pre-reflective
387 framework of experience could serve to underpin the constitution of a tool for the qualitative
388 and dimensional evaluation of alterations of the everyday in schizophrenia. A preliminary
389 study could thus be based on both EASE and EAWE scale items relating to the experience of
390 the everyday, as well as on the four dimensions of everydayness identified in this article, in
391 order to provide the empirical basis for an exploratory clinical study.

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